



**CITY OF LA MARQUE
CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MINUTES
of
September 22, 2025**

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Bell called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

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

3. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bell led the invocation and Human Resources Manager Mikala Halbrook led the pledge.

4. PRESENTATIONS

4.I. Award: Texas Water Utilities Association (TWUA) Alliance Award

Shannon Breaux presented the award bestowed upon the City of La Marque and briefly expressed the impact of the award.

4.II. Proclamation: Baby Stewart Foundation

Mayor Keith Bell presented a proclamation celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Baby Stewart Foundation to Ashley Gooden-Stewart. Mrs. Gooden-Stewart shared words of appreciation.

4.III. Proclamation: Paul's Union Church Founder's Day

Mayor Keith Bell presented a proclamation to representatives of Paul's Union Church celebrating 130 years of service in La Marque.

5. CITIZENS PARTICIPATION

Robert Harvey (*no address given*) expressed concerns about City's financial conditions. He also raised concerns of a councilmember and condemned his politically and racially motivated conduct.

Mike Bock (Longview Drive) spoke on behalf of "doom and gloom" of the budget in regard to the Bayou Fest. He also discussed his heartburn in regard to funding of certain events, especially the upcoming Veterans Day breakfast and Christmas Parade.

Serena (1900 Palm) spoke on lingering debris from Hurricane Beryl. She noted the safety hazards and concern over the lack of resolution as this hurricane took place over a year ago. She also voiced her opposition to a tax increase and requested a forensic audit.

Elizabeth Turner (2010 Howell) asked what citizens would gain from a tax increase. She expressed how La Marque is a medium-sized town that cannot afford a tax increase and emphasized the impact on small businesses. She wants answers about how the city got to where it currently is.

Robert Michetich (24 N Curlew) spoke on a letter sent to council and posted to social media. He stated that he has found a solution that would avoid a tax increase. He opined that any increase would be "crushing" for the city and stated that there will be problems if this tax rate is passed.

James Dewalt (Pearl St.) shared his concern over the police department and the over-policing occurring in certain neighborhoods, in particular the brown and black communities. He also reported missing political signs.

Haley Winkelmann (*no address provided*) voiced the need to create solutions rather than place blame in terms of the budget and current needs of the city. She expressed her fears if the city services disappeared and how it would affect Fire, EMS, and Police responses. She also spoke about the tax roll-back and how it affected the city.

Carolyn Small (1121 Prune St) asked for an investigation into the Police Department by either the FBI or the Texas Rangers due to favoritism. She spoke about how a crime is looked at differently by the police depending on who reports it.

Lisa Bandy (702 Newman) called for the resignation of Mayor Keith Bell due to the current state of La Marque. She also expressed concern about downtown development and how new businesses could create jobs, tax revenues, etc. for the betterment of the City. She requested an audit from an external auditor.

Pamela Mahan (3010 Rose Lane) raised concerns about utility billing – specifically asking for a reduction in trash pick-up prices, long-standing sewer system issues, street conditions, and pothole repairs in her neighborhood. She reported chronic sewer backups, repeated private repair expenses, and unresolved infrastructure problems despite the city's awareness. She noted the heavier traffic in her neighborhood which has resulted in potholes.

Carl Beard (Texas City) reported an alleged incident involving an assault in the City parking lot and stated his intent to file a police report, citing prior concerns about responses to previous reports. He then spoke in support of a tax rate increase, stating that rising operational costs, inflation, infrastructure needs, and commodity price fluctuations make an increase necessary to maintain City services. He emphasized that other municipalities have raised tax rates and asserted that continued reliance on the current rate is unsustainable.

Re'chard Loftis (*no address given*) spoke about servant leadership and the "cost of conflict." He expressed the need for transparency and need for city operations. He shared that the city services will continue to decrease if taxes are not raised. He also discussed the Council-Manager form of government and to stop placing blame solely on council as they are not the ones signing the checks.

Travis Perthius (Avenue A) spoke about local law enforcement practices, citing a recent personal encounter with police that he described as excessive and harmful. He expressed frustration with perceived misuse of police authority and lack of community

engagement by officers. He also referenced prior issues involving City administration and emphasized his belief in God-given rights that should be protected by the government.

Bria Hardman (2607 Cedar) stated that the community is all in this together. She shared that La Marque should be profitable by working together so that the kids have a way to go to school and come back to La Marque. She also requested transparency with the budget.

Mildred Hardman (2607 Cedar) requested peace within the City. She asked the Council and staff to focus on moving the City forward together versus division.

Brandon Kantowski (no address given) spoke about how the fencing between his property and his neighbor's property is potentially dangerous. He requested that a Code Enforcement Officer inspect the property.

Nicholas Roque (1535 Newman Rd) raised questions regarding the proposed tax increase, noting concerns about the incomplete FY 2024 audit, compliance with Local Government Code §103, alternative funding sources, council members' financial disclosures (Gov't Code Chapter 572), lack of a detailed spending breakdown, and the Texas Public Information Act (Chapter 552). He requested the Council delay any tax rate vote until the audit and disclosures are publicly available, and highlighted reliance on grants and municipal fines as part of his concerns.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS

***Mayor Bell recessed the Regular City Council meeting and opened the Public Hearing at 7:15 p.m.*

6.I. Ordinance No. O-2025-0018

James Ross (Ave D) conveyed how City Council has no administrative function and how they have to go off the information that they are given. He also shared concerns about the trash services and the water rates, requesting that the information be placed online.

Justin McDonald (3 Pine Circle) spoke on how citizens have been requesting different accounting measures and want to be informed. He spoke about differing revenues and requested an audit as well as good projections. He vocalized his opposition in raising taxes.

6.II. Ordinance No. O-2025-0019

Robert Michetich (24 N Curlew) stated that, like most citizens, he wants to know where money went initially. He discussed rising costs in appraisals and water bills. He stated that there is a solution.

Elizabeth Turner (*no address given*) opined on how the city is old and outdated. She stated that the city is failing somewhere and wants accountability, transparency, and answers.

Travis Perthius (Avenue A) impressed upon the history of the town.

7. OLD BUSINESS

***Mayor Bell closed the Public Hearing and reconvened the Regular City Council Meeting at 7:29 p.m.*

7.1. 2024 Single Audit

Finance Director Worth Ferguson clarified that the 2023-2024 audit was complete and the city did not break any laws in terms of completing the audit in the state statutory time.

Mayor Bell asked Interim City Manager Barbara Holly and City Attorney Gus Knebel if the city has broken any state laws regarding this audit. Both stated that the audit was indeed complete by state statute timelines and no laws had been broken.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian requested written correspondence that no laws have been broken from Interim City Manager Holly and City Attorney Knebel.

Mike Brooks, CPA with BrooksWatson & Co. presented the summary presentation of the 2023 - 2024 audit and its findings to Council.

***Mayor Bell left the dias at 7:34pm and returned at 7:35 p.m.*

Mayor Pro Tem Compian questioned how long the firm has been working with the city and how many other cities in Texas it supports. It was determined that this firm has had a relationship with the City of La Marque for approximately 13 years and their current contract with the city is in its fourth of five years. Mr. Brooks also indicated that the firm services 70 other cities throughout the state.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian expressed that "incompetent people" are the reason for delays in the audit over the last four years. Discussion regarding the use of management ensued. It was determined that management was defined to be the Finance Management team.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian referenced letters received by Council discussing how he had issues in regard to the finances. Clarification was made by Finance Director Ferguson. Discussion ensued regarding the 90-day reserve in the 2020 Audit and the Disaster Emergency Fund in the 2022 Audit.

Councilman Lowry discussed Senate Bill 1851 and how the city was out of compliance with auditing. Gus Knebel explained how SB 1851 does not apply to the City's current situation.

Councilmember Yancy expressed how this audit was the "worst" she has seen and there were more corrections needed than ever.

Mayor Bell discussed the difference between a council-manager form of government and a strong mayor form of government. Fraud was discussed and how the auditing firm incorporates the information. Mayor Bell asked directly, "how does this happen?" Mr. Brooks responded that the city overspent and referred to pages 104 and 105 of the audit discussing the General Fund expenditures and revenues.

Councilwoman Griffin discussed the "yellow flags" within the audit results along with the processes within City departments. Her question was what Council would do to resolve process issues within the city.

Finance Director Ferguson briefly discussed policy changes he is enforcing as well as how the new financial software will assist with reporting.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian spoke on unfunded liabilities, including comp time as well as sick and vacation time. He reiterated the need for a Finance Committee.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian made a motion to approve the 2024 Single

Audit. Councilmember Griffin seconded. **MOTION CARRIED 4 AYES AND 1 NAY (LOWRY).**

7.II. Ordinance No. O-2025-0018

Interim City Manager Holly presented the current standing in the budget. She requested that council vote for the new tax rate of 0.452161 in order to begin resupplying the City coffers. Finance Director Ferguson discussed how the budget can be amended if the situation improves in the future.

**Councilmember Griffin exited the dias at 9:27 p.m.*

Councilmember Lowry questioned how events can cause so much overtime for Public Safety. Hurricane Beryl created \$1.3 in overtime.

Interim City Manager Holly discussed how FY23 had a surplus of \$3 million, but within the last two years, the budget has not been properly handled. Finance Director Ferguson reiterated that there are going to be policy changes due to the previous failures.

**Councilmember Griffin returned to the dias at 9:29 p.m.*

Discussion ensued about Development Services inspection services as well as engineering services. Fee adjustments were recommended to be made.

**Councilmember Yancy left the dias at 9:40 p.m.*

Finance Director Ferguson brought up the issue that over \$1M worth of bills have been found since the last Council meeting.

**Councilmember Yancy returned to the dias at 9:43 p.m.*

Mayor Pro Tem Compian argued that a tax rate increase is not needed as he is not

comfortable with the numbers. An emergency line of credit was recommended for federally declared disasters.

Discussion ensued about cutting the budget and where to cut. Finance Director Worth Ferguson explained how the budget is currently set to provide services that citizens have become accustomed to, but if cuts are made, then services would have to reflect that change. Mayor Bell requested that \$910,000 be cut from the proposed budget.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian made a motion to accept the budget. Councilmember Yancy seconded. **MOTION CARRIED 3 AYES (COMPIAN, YANCY, GRIFFIN) AND 2 NAYS (BELL, LOWRY).**

7.III. Ordinance No. O-2025-0019

A brief discussion ensued recapping the prior discussions on the budget needs and tax rate.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian requested that the Administration go back and make cuts to the budget to lower the proposed tax rate.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian made a motion to approve the tax rate. Councilmember Yancy seconded. **MOTION CARRIED 3 AYES (COMPIAN, YANCY, GRIFFIN) AND 2 NAYS (BELL, LOWRY).**

7.IV. Boards and Commissions Appointments
NO ACTION TAKEN.

8. NEW BUSINESS

- 8.I. Ordinance No. O-2025-0022
Chief Merryman presented an updated fee schedule from 2018 to 2024. Mayor Pro Tem Compian questioned residential fees compared to commercial fees assessed.
Mayor Pro Tem Compian made a motion to approve Ordinance No. O-2025-0022. Councilmember Yancy seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**
- 8.II. Ordinance No. O-2025-0023
Chief Merryman presented an updated fee schedule for applications due in January 2026.
Mayor Pro Tem Compian made a motion to approve Ordinance No. O-2025-0023. Councilmember Yancy seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**
- 8.III. Ordinance No. O-2025-0024
Finance Director Worth Ferguson discussed the annual contract with Waste Management.
Councilmember Yancy made a motion to approve Ordinance No. O-2025-0024. Mayor Pro Tem Compian seconded. **MOTION PASSED 4 AYES AND 1 NAY (LOWRY).**
- 8.IV. Resolution No. R-2025-0038
Mayor Pro Tem Compian made a motion to approve Resolution No. R-2025-0038. Councilmember Yancy seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**
- 8.V. Resolution No. R-2025-0039
**Mayor Pro Tem Compian left the dias at 10:51 p.m.*
Councilmember Yancy made a motion to approve Resolution No. R-2025-0039. Councilmember Griffin seconded. **MOTION CARRIED 4 AYES AND 1 ABSENT (COMPIAN).**
- 8.VI. Resolution No. R-2025-0040
Councilmember Yancy made a motion to approve Resolution No. R-2025-0040. Councilmember Griffin seconded. **MOTION CARRIED 4 AYES AND 1 ABSENT (COMPIAN).**
- 8.VII. Resolution No. R-2025-0041
Councilmember Yancy made a motion to approve Resolution No. R-2025-0041. Councilmember Griffin seconded. **MOTION CARRIED 4 AYES AND 1 ABSENT (COMPIAN).**
- 8.VIII. Resolution No. R-2025-0042
Councilmember Yancy made a motion to approve Resolution No. R-2025-0042. Councilmember Griffin seconded. **MOTION CARRIED 4 AYES AND 1 ABSENT (COMPIAN).**
- 8.IX. Amendment to Hiring Freeze
Mayor Pro Tem Compian returned to dias at 10:53pm
Mayor Bell recapped the last Economic Development Corporation (EDC) meeting, explaining the finances behind the requested finance position.

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to approve the amendment to the hiring freeze. Councilmember Griffin seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- 8.X. Contract with Economic Development Corporation
Finance Director Worth Ferguson stated that a meeting with the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) in regard to the Revitalization Fund took place and an agreement was made for a loan in the amount of \$1.5 Million dollars over five years that will be paid back in one lump sum.
Councilmember Griffin made a motion to approve the contract with the Economic Development Corporation. Councilmember Yancy seconded. **MOTION CARRIED 4 AYES AND 1 NAY (LOWRY).**
- 8.XI. Fire Collective Bargaining Agreement
Attorney Gus Knebel discussed the term sheet, highlighting the changes to the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). Chief David Merryman went through all the terms that have been agreed upon by the negotiation teams.
Councilmember Yancy made a motion to approve the Fire Collective Bargaining Agreement. Councilmember Lowry seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**
- 8.XII. Police Collective Bargaining Agreement
Chief Randall Aragon discussed the negotiation terms of the proposed one-year agreement. The highlights included compensation time being capped at 180-hours, approved changes in the schedule, and 4% raises beginning in January. Mayor Pro Tem Compian made a motion to approve the Police Collective Bargaining Agreement. Councilmember Yancy seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**
- 8.XIII. Interlocal Agreement - Gulf Coast Auto Crimes Task Force FY 2025 - 2026
Chief Randall Aragon introduced La Marque Task Force Officer Aaron Skaggs and Lieutenant Smitty Hill of the Galveston County Auto Taskforce. Lt. Hill presented a PowerPoint on the value of the Auto Crimes Task Force within the County.
Councilmember Yancy made a motion to approve the Interlocal Agreement between the La Marque Police Department and the Gulf Coast Auto Crimes Task Force for fiscal year 2025 - 2026. Councilmember Lowry seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**
- 8.XIV. Interlocal Agreement - City of La Marque and Drainage District #2
Councilmember Yancy made a motion to approve the Interlocal Agreement between the City of La Marque and Drainage District #2.
Councilmember Griffin seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**
- 8.XV. Request for Qualifications: Grant Administration Services
Interim City Manager Holly expressed the need for a grant writer for the city and discussed the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process.
Mayor Pro Tem Compian stated that he sent sole source information to Administration twice. He is requesting that no action be taken. He also

requested that everything be shown to him in writing.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian made a motion to table this item. Councilmember Yancy seconded. **MOTION CARRIED 3 AYES AND 2 NAYS (BELL, GRIFFIN)**

9. CITY MANAGER REPORT

9.I. August 2025 Municipal Court Monthly Statistics
Stood as submitted.

9.II. August 2025 Crime Rate Statistics
Stood as submitted.

9.III. Monthly Projects Report
Interim City Manager Holly presented a spreadsheet of grant projects currently happening in the City.

9.IV. Items for the Good of the Order
Interim City Manager Holly announced Coffee with a Cop event on October 1st from 9:30 - 11:30 a.m., National Night Out on October 7 starting at 6:00 p.m. at Mac McGaffey Highland Bayou Park. She also announced Trunk-or-Treat at the La Marque Library on Thursday, October 23rd from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m., a candlelight vigil on October 2nd in honor of National Domestic Violence Awareness Month from 6:00 - 7:00 p.m. and the Unified Town Hall on October 4th from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Central Fire Station.

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

11. ACTIONS TAKEN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

There were no actions taken.

12. REQUESTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilmember Griffin is spearheading a community service initiative by hosting a food distribution drive. She also wants to have a Thanksgiving community meal that is completely volunteer-based.

Councilmember Lowry expressed frustration of things not being addressed in District C. He requested that concerns be heard and looked into administratively, stating he has sent concerns "to city emails." He also spoke of heartburn regarding Public Information Records (PIR) that he has not received. He also announced that District C will have a Halloween Decorating Contest.

Councilmember Yancy congratulated Ms. Vera Bell-Gary on the naming of an administrative Texas City Independent School District (TCISD) building. She requested city swag to be available for the town hall meeting being held in October. She announced that Reverend James Daniels funeral would be held this weekend. She requested a meeting with Interim City Manager Holly and Attorney Gus Knebel regarding her and her family's safety.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian echoed his condolences for Rev. Daniels' family. He shared his excitement about working with Councilwoman Griffin on several upcoming projects. He announced that he attended a Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership meeting where

Senator Ted Cruz, spoken noting that funding has been preserved for NASA. He also attended an educational summit held by College of the Mainland.

Mayor Bell began by thanking the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) for their wonderful meeting this past week. Their resources in assisting the City have been greatly appreciated. He spoke about the honor of reading a proclamation for Ms. Vera Bell-Gary, where she was recently honored. He spoke highly of the former Rev. Daniels and how his service was exemplified through his union work. He requested that \$910,268 be cut from the budget so that taxes will not have to be raised.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to adjourn. Mayor Pro Tem Compian seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

***Meeting was adjourned at 11:54 p.m.*