



**CITY OF LA MARQUE
CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL JOINT MINUTES
of
July 7, 2025**

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Bell called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Keith Bell

Mayor

Joe Compian

Mayor Pro Tem, District B

Kimberly Yancy

Councilmember District A (arrived at 4:33 p.m.)

Joseph Lowry

Councilmember District C

Tonia Griffin

Councilmember District D

Dashiel Cantu

Public Safety Building Committee Chairperson

Wilmon Smith

Public Safety Building Committee Vice Chairperson

Robert Michetich

Public Safety Building Committee Member

Jamie Loftis

Public Safety Building Committee Member

Sally Austin

Public Safety Building Committee Alternate

Jackie Pennington

Public Safety Building Committee Alternate

ABSENT:

Orlando Archibald

Public Safety Building Committee Member

CITY STAFF:

Kasey Lott

Deputy City Clerk

3. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bell led the invocation.

4. PRESENTATIONS

4.1. Project Luong - Public Safety Building Assessment

Alec Luong, Lead Architect and Principal-Managing Partner with Project Luong, provided an updated analysis and recommendations related to the proposed Public Safety Building for consideration in the upcoming bond election. He explained that the city had a work study done on the current building in 2022, and it was determined that the existing station does not meet the operational needs due to insufficient space, an outdated and nonfunctional evidence room, and the need for an entirely new HVAC system.

Mr. Luong also spoke about the Police Department's operational needs and program requirements. He noted that the study conducted shows the

minimum required spaces versus the desired enhancements. The study's core requirements included modernizing the holding cells up to best practice standards, creating a secure sally port for detainee intake, upgrading the evidence storage to meet current standards, and creating adequate patrol, administrative, and support areas. He noted that in 2022, the court functions were being considered within the new building. However, the current expectations were to focus on the police department and its functions only. Mr. Luong shared that Project Luong completed a new study at Council's direction to assess two separate sites – Public Works Building A and a location at Vauthier St.—and presented the pros and cons of each site. Public Works Building A is currently owned by the city and can fit the current physical programmed space that is desired. However, the site would need to be brought up to Base Flood Elevation (BFE) standards and a structural retrofit to meet police station standards. There is additional concern for secure officer parking, cost-effectiveness, and overall layout for efficiency. The Vauthier St. location would allow for a complete new build and would address all the shortfalls from the Public Works Building A site. However, the city does not currently own this land, and it is located in a residential area. He also noted that the Vauthier site would be a one-story building, which would create a cost difference compared to the two-story building layout at Public Works Building A.

***Councilmember Lowry left the dias at 4:57 p.m. and returned at 5:02 p.m.*

Mr. Luong discussed the pricing options and noted that, as a municipality, the city does not have to follow certain standards, but for best practices, it would be in the city's interest to follow the Texas State guidelines. He pulled comparable costs of buildings that were built from 2016 through present to show an expected cost range and indicated the cost of inflation would need to be accounted for in pricing out the project. He recommended addressing the cost as soon as possible to avoid additional rate increases. He presented estimates in the amount of \$19,000,000 for the renovation to Public Works Building A, and \$20,000,000 for the Vauthier site. He noted that there would be additional costs for the Vauthier site because the land has not been purchased.

4.II. Stifel - Financial Analysis and Bonding Capacity

Brad Angst of Stifel Public Finance joined the meeting remotely and apologized for technical difficulties. He noted that the firm was informed that the Council was considering placing a General Obligation (G.O.) bond proposition before the voters and would be attending the upcoming Council meeting for continued discussions.

Mr. Angst shared that prior analyses included Certificates of Obligation and tax notes, which provide single-point-in-time financing. He stated that with the Council's potential consideration of a G.O. bond election, a different evaluation was conducted. He explained that the financing would be projected over a five-year issuance window, not a single issuance. If the voters authorize a G.O. bond proposition, the city is permitted to issue bonds for up to ten years; however, typical issuance occurs within five years. He noted that design, architecture, engineering, and reconstruction processes

typically take 2-3 years post-election, so immediate financing would not be necessary.

He presented updated assessed valuation information that became available through Galveston Central Appraisal District (GCAD), which showed a preliminary growth of approximately 8%. This is lower than prior years, but still positive. He shared that the updated analysis indicated improved bonding capacity with lower projected tax impacts than previously reported.

Mr. Angst presented estimates on estimated borrowing capacity based on if the Council were to raise tax rates and offered 3 different scenarios. Without an increase in taxes, the estimated borrowing capacity would be \$17.5 million; at a \$0.01 tax increase, the city's estimated borrowing capacity would grow to \$23 million; at a \$0.03 increase, the city's estimated capacity is \$31 million, and at a \$0.05 increase, the city's estimated borrowing capacity would be approximately \$39 million.

He noted that for a November election, the Council must adopt an election order or resolution between August 6 and August 18.

5. CITIZENS PARTICIPATION

6. NEW BUSINESS

6.1. Public Safety Building

Mayor Pro Tem Compian asked about the jail space needs and the number of prisoners that are housed.

Mr. Luong noted that in order to keep the same number of beds that are currently at the jail, additional space is needed to meet current standards. He noted the need for a booking area, jailer space, separate cells for men and women, hazmat showers, and a detox area would all be required. Committee member Cantu spoke about the needs of the jail and current practices. He noted that the city has shied away from housing and will send prisoners to Galveston County when possible. Mayor Pro Tem Compian asked if the County sends out a van or if the is responsible for transport. Committee Member Cantu noted that sometimes the County will send a transport van. Mayor Bell asked that if the jail was up to standards, would the police keep more prisoners in jail? Committee Member Cantu agreed, noting that it is currently a safety issue.

Mayor Pro Tem shared his belief of "living within our means" and does not agree with the high cost. He presented studies to the group regarding modular construction in the form of pre-built sections and made documents available on the quotes he gathered.

Committee Member Smith asked Mayor Pro Tem Compian if he had an amount in mind to "live within our means." Mayor Pro Tem Compian requested to speak with the Stifel representative to understand the cost needs.

Committee Member Smith shared his concern about waiting to proceed on this project because the costs will only continue to get higher. He asked Council for more direction to get this project moving forward.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian expressed his concern about when this goes to the voters. He wants to ensure that it passes.

Councilmember Yancy shared her support of building a new facility on Vauthier, as she believes it is around the center of the community. She asked about the unknown costs in terms of inflation rates for the other building.

Mr. Luong gave details as to several issues that the building is currently facing, including a tilt and structural adjustments that he cannot give a direct cost to fix. He shared that "only a handful of times" do owners feel that completing a retrofit cost was worth the long term risk.

Councilmember Yancy asked to consider 3-D printing options for cost-saving measures.

Mr. Luong shared that it is a possibility when it meets certain needs. He noted it was worthy of investigation.

Mayor Bell shared his support with Committee Member Smith on how a pre-fabricated may not be the best for a public safety building. He suggested trimming the number of jail cells to help with overall cost, as opposed to a modular building.

Committee Member Cantu noted that there is an anticipation of the city growing and cannot predict the potential need for the space in the future. He requested to at least keep the same number of cells available.

Mayor Bell asked that if the police department has detainees, do other police departments in the area help with housing them? Committee Member Cantu stated that it is not a common practice.

Mr. Luong noted that policing changes as communities evolve. He explained that expanding a jail is very difficult due to security needs. He shared that municipal buildings are a source of pride for the city. Surrounding cities take pride in civic buildings and a value is noted. If this is the first bond to pass, there would be a source of civic pride.

Councilmember Lowry supported keeping the same number of jail cells. He stated, "If you are going to do crime here, you are going to do time here."

Councilmember Yancy brought up 3-D printing as something that the city may be able to get tax rates from it because it is new.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian noted that HUD is about to approve a half billion dollars for a Hurricane Beryl block grant. He wants the city to access as much of those funds as possible. He also requested adding disaster response purposes within the facility for additional value.

***Brad Angst with Stifel joined the meeting via phone call and gave a presentation. This item resumed after the presentation.*

Mayor Pro Tem Compian expressed concern regarding the feasibility due to the lack of ownership of the Vauthier property and the uncertainty if the school district intends to sell it.

Mayor Bell stated that the council needs to act fast, as there are several issues with Building A. He emphasized the need to contact the Texas City Independent School District (TCISD) immediately to determine if the district is willing to sell and at what price.

Mayor Bell opened the floor to the Public Safety Building Committee members who had not spoken on the matter.

Alternate Committee Member Pennington shared that the time is short, the dance has gone long enough, and a decision needs to be made.

Committee Member Michetich supported the suggestions brought up by Mayor Pro Tem Compian. He believes that with the rising costs, this will be "a tough pill to swallow." He noted that tight timeframes and requested updates from the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) on potential land purchases from TCISD.

Discussion regarding potential site options and pricing ensued.

Mr. Luong stated that a full structural analysis of Building A is necessary to determine retrofit costs to meet TDI and critical-facility standards. He noted that moving the building is possible, but may not be cost-effective. He shared that reusing the structural shell would be more realistic. He also opined that a full Building A site plan would need to be developed, which would include the demolition and relocation of Buildings B and C in the process. He noted that cost estimates would be based on order of magnitude, not final bids.

Council noted the necessity for developing two separate plans and stressed the need for direction, timely feedback, and streamlined communication.

Mayor Pro Tem suggested that Mayor Bell and one other council member be considered as contacts for the board to expedite the process, to which Mayor Bell agreed.

Mayor Pro Tem made a motion for the staff, consultants, and Public Safety Building Committee to determine the availability and potential purchase terms of the Westlawn property; conduct structural cost analysis for the Building A site redevelopment; provide cost comparisons and planning assumptions for both sites; and return the findings to Council at the second Monday meeting in August. Councilmember Yancy seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

7. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

8. ACTIONS TAKEN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

There were no actions taken.

9. REQUESTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

No one made any requests or announcements.

10. ADJOURNMENT

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