



City of West Orange

City Hall  
2700 Western Avenue  
West Orange, TX 77630

City Council  
Budget Workshop  
Minutes

Monday, August 12, 2024

5:55 p.m.

Council Chamber

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor Randy Branch  
Meritta Kennedy

Michael Shugart, Sr.  
Lanie Brown

Jay Odom

OFFICIALS ABSENT:

Brent Dearing

APPOINTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Theresa Van Meter  
Christopher Leavins

Jon Sherwin  
David Roberts

Mike Stelly  
Simmie Gibson

Call to Order

Mayor Branch called the workshop to order at 5:55 p.m.

Workshop

2024-25 PROPOSED BUDGET SUMMARY

|                                                  | <u>Operations</u>   | <u>Capital<br/>Outlay</u> | <u>Total</u>        |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 10 General Administration                        | \$ 544,436          | -                         | \$ 544,436          |
| 11 Building Official                             | 161,763             | -                         | 161,763             |
| 12 Fire Department                               | 163,822             | 58,000                    | 221,822             |
| 13 Sanitation                                    | 745,463             | -                         | 745,463             |
| 14 Humane                                        | 88,905              | -                         | 88,905              |
| 15 Police                                        | 2,287,357           | 240,000                   | 2,527,357           |
| 16 Municipal Court                               | 200,423             | -                         | 200,423             |
| 17 Street                                        | 512,512             | 133,000                   | 645,512             |
| 18 Parks & Facilities                            | 100,411             | -                         | 100,411             |
| 21 Maintenance Shop                              | 96,323              | -                         | 96,323              |
|                                                  | <u>\$ 4,901,415</u> | <u>431,000</u>            | <u>\$ 5,332,415</u> |
|                                                  |                     |                           |                     |
| TOTAL REVENUE                                    |                     | \$ 3,786,284              |                     |
| +Court Technology Fund Transfer                  |                     | 30,000                    |                     |
| + Capital Imp. Fund Transfer                     |                     | 401,000                   |                     |
|                                                  |                     | <u>\$ 4,217,284</u>       |                     |
| TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES                         |                     | \$ 4,901,415              |                     |
| TOTAL CAPITAL OUTLAY                             |                     | <u>431,000</u>            |                     |
|                                                  |                     | <u>\$ 5,332,415</u>       |                     |
|                                                  |                     |                           |                     |
| Potential shortfall                              |                     | \$(1,115,131)             |                     |
| (to be funded from prior years' retained income) |                     |                           |                     |

Mayor Branch asked if there were any questions pertaining to the Budget Summary page. With there being none, he moved on to the Revenue section.

He pointed out that there will be an additional \$20,000 in revenue brought in that is not shown on this page as the West Orange Economic Development Corporation voted to pay the city \$20,000 per year for any work done/time spent on EDC business.

Council Member Brown asked how many entities made payments "in lieu of taxes." Mrs. Van Meter responded, "Dow, InVista, Celanese, Chem32, Claybar Dirt Pit."

While discussing the General Administration Department, Mrs. Van Meter informed Council that her Utilities line item will most likely be over budget by the end of the year. This will be due to the new monthly natural gas expense for the generator. It will run a test each month...not to mention if there is a power outage and it runs for hours or days.

Mayor Branch pointed out that he had removed the Brush Truck from the Fire Department budget. He stated that he felt the city could not afford it, however if they could come up with a grant for it, he would be glad to amend the budget. Asst. Chief Gibson responded that he has applied for grants, but none have come through. He added that the cost could be split over two budget years. Council Member Shugart asked how much that would be for each year. Asst. Chief Gibson responded that it would be approximately \$170,000 per year. Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy asked how many brush fires had occurred this year. She was told just a few trash fires...nothing really, but this time last year there had already been "a bunch."

Council Member Odom questioned the "R & R Revenue Offset" expense line in the Sanitation Department. Mrs. Van Meter responded that "R & R" represented "Renewal & Replacement." Mayor Branch explained that those funds could be used to replace equipment needed in the Sanitation Department. Chief Stelly pointed out that this expense line is a budgeting tool to offset the R&R revenue line item. Mrs. Van Meter added that \$1 from each month's trash payment goes into a dedicated "R&R" bank account whose funds are set aside for equipment or special needs for the Sanitation Department. Chief Stelly stated that the R&R account pays for equipment such as the brush/grapple truck used to pick up limbs.

Council Member Odom commented on what a blessing for the Humane Department in the amount of donated food received. Council Member Brown inquired as to the condition of the shelter. She stated that she has never "laid eyes on it." Mr. Sherwin stated that it is "functional." It is not pretty to look at and there is nothing that can be done to make it pretty to look at. He added, "it is what it is and it is functional for the citizens."

Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy asked Chief Stelly how many police vehicles would be purchased with his budgeted line-item amount. He responded, "two." He added that the cost of vehicles has skyrocketed, and they are very difficult to get at all. Now there is even a backlog on the equipment that is added to the vehicles. He explained that his budget includes some equipment, but they try to move as much equipment from the old vehicles to the new ones as possible. In fact, some of their overhead lights are over ten years old. Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy commended him for that. He responded that "just because we may have the money doesn't mean we spend it."

Linebarger collections in court are going well. Council Member Brown questioned if fines collected covered the costs of operating the court. Chief Stelly responded that about \$100 from every ticket goes to the State in taxes and the rest goes into the General Fund which also covers the operating expenses of the court. Mayor Branch added that Linebarger's collection fees are added at the end...not taken from what is owed to the city.

Council Member Brown questioned the "Equipment/Property" expense line in the Street Department. Mr. Sherwin explained that this is money that is budgeted, or set aside, in the event that equipment is found at auction that can be used, or it can be used to cover the cost of a piece of equipment such as a mower, should it break down and need to be replaced.

Mayor Branch reported that the city has applied for grants to make improvements in the parks.

There were no questions or comments pertaining to the Maintenance Shop.

Discussion then went back to the Summary Page. Some questions followed regarding the proposed tax rate in comparison to the current tax rate. Mrs. Van Meter explained that the actual rate is decreasing, but because property values have increased, the city will actually see

an increase in tax revenue. But that is not because the city has increased taxes...it is because the values have increased.

Chief Stelly then pointed out the notation of the “Potential Shortfall” at the bottom of the Summary. He explained that this was upon recommendation of the auditor for transparency. This shows a deficit budget which would be covered by retained income. Mrs. Van Meter added “That’s why it’s so important to remember – just because it’s budgeted, doesn’t mean you have to spend it.”

**Announcements**

Mayor Branch then made note of the following upcoming meetings:

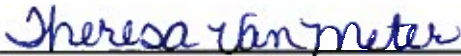
- Thursday, Sept. 5, 2024; 5:00 p.m. – Public Hearing on Proposed Budget
- Thursday, Sept. 5, 2024; 5:15 p.m. – Public Hearing on Proposed Tax Rate  
*(Mrs. Van Meter stressed the importance of having a quorum at these hearings. Without a quorum, they will have to be held over again until a quorum is present, which would delay voting on the budget and the tax rate.)*
- Monday, Sept. 9, 2024; 5:00 p.m. – Council Meeting  
*(Adoption of Budget & Tax Rate on Agenda)*
- Saturday, Nov. 2, 2024 – HOLIDAY IN THE PARK

**Adjournment**

With there being no further business before Council, Mayor Branch adjourned the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

  
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Randy Branch, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Theresa Van Meter, City Secretary

