



City of West Orange

City Hall
2700 Western Avenue
West Orange, TX 77630

City Council Regular Session Meeting Minutes

Monday, August 12, 2024

5:00 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

OTHERS PRESENT:

Vera Bacon
Jane Branch
Barbara Dardeau
Gail Langton
Edwin Armstrong
Chance Iribarren
Michelle Luna
Veda Butler
Jessie Romero

Richard Jones
Ida Schossow
Esteban Garcia
Tremaine Wilson
Twyla Brunner
Ralph Iribarren
Claude Webb
Charles Cobb
Israel Carrillo

Rob Strause
Gary Stelly
Roman Garcia
Corey Bull
Hannah Sonnenberg
Epifanio Munguia
James Fisette
Charlotte Cobb
Matt Frederick

Call to Order

Mayor Branch called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Council Member Shugart gave the invocation. The mayor then led in the Pledges of Allegiance to both the United States and Texas flags.

Presentation

Chief Stelly showed a portion of a 30+ minute video of a rescue event that took place on July 24, 2024 within the City. The video was West Orange Office Charles Cobb's body-cam footage. It showed the heroic rescue of a woman (Jonquetta Winbush) who, while driving, had a seizure and driven into a retention pond on SH87. Thanks to the efforts of Officer Cobb, Mr. Epifanio Munguia and Mr. Corey Bull, Ms. Winbush was pulled from the automobile and given CPR until paramedics arrived. After three weeks on a ventilator, she was recently moved from ICU and now expected to make a full recovery.

Mayor Branch and Chief Stelly then presented Mr. Munguia and Mr. Bull with plaques of appreciation for their exceptional heroism of that day. Officer Cobb was also presented with a plaque and a Letter of Commendation - Lifesaving Award. Chief Stelly then presented him with a Lifesaving Medal.

Consent Agenda

Discussion and Possible Action on approval of the minutes of the July 8, 2024 City Council Meeting and July 15, 2024 Special-Called Council Meeting - These minutes were unanimously approved by vote after a motion was made by Council Member Brown with a second by Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy.

Public Comments

Ms. Vera Bacon (1313 Travis Street) addressed Council regarding a dog in her neighborhood that she said has been attacking other dogs and people as well. She asked that something be done about the dog before someone is badly injured. Her dog was severely injured and required surgery after being attacked by that dog.

Mayor Branch explained to her that her concerns would be addressed by the City's Animal Control Officer, but if she wished, she could be added to a future agenda to openly discuss the matter with Council.

Mrs. Barbara Dardeau (3015 Kelley Street) then addressed Council regarding the recent chemical leak in the City. She stated that the citizens of West Orange deserved better than they received that day. The citizens received no warning or communication at all from the City regarding the situation. She then proposed some type of large emergency speaker that everyone in town could hear in the event of an emergency.

Public Hearing on Fair Housing

At 5:24 p.m., Mayor Branch convened a public hearing on Fair Housing to solicit input from the community concerning awareness for the support of fair housing as well as to address concerns of residents as they may relate to fair housing.

With there being no input either from the public, or Council, the mayor adjourned this hearing at 5:25 p.m.

Public Hearing on Substandard Properties

The City Council entered into a Public Hearing to discuss the substandard and hazardous conditions of three properties, along with possible remedies to said conditions at 5:25 p.m.

2610 Tanglewood – Mr. Corbett reported that he has issued a building permit for this property and wishes to withdraw it from the list at this time.

2713 Stevenson – Mr. Corbett stated that he has had no contact with the owner of this property within the last thirty days. Mr. Armstrong (the owner) then spoke from the audience. He reported that he had spent over \$1,200 during the past week cleaning up the property. He has foundation work scheduled to be done in October (which is the soonest his contractor could get to his job). Once the foundation is repaired, he will start on the roof.

2832 Bonham – Mr. Corbett reported that he has received a scope of work and an elevation certificate from the owner. He would like to withdraw this property from this list at this time.

Adjourn Public Hearing

With there being no further discussion, Mayor Branch adjourned the Public Hearing and reconvened Council in Regular Session at 5:29 p.m.

Staff Reports

Public Works – Jon Sherwin

Mr. Sherwin reported the following activities for the month of July, 2024:

- ***Construction Projects***
 - Waste Water Treatment Plant contract has been awarded; Notice to Proceed (NTP) June 17, 2024; construction has begun
 - City Hall Generator Project – online; still has work to be performed and punch list
 - Drainage improvement project – culvert replacement complete
- ***Building Official***
 - 25 permits issued (1 new construction)
 - 47 permits completed
- ***Sanitation***
 - 30 loads of green waste collected (\$4,500)
 - 1 (3 tons) loads of C & D to landfill
- ***Animal Control***
 - 85 calls
 - 9 intakes
 - 0 claimed/3 adopted/1 rescued
 - 2 court filings
- ***Street***
 - Began ditch re-grading on Crockett St. between Dayton & Albany
 - Patching utility cuts and potholes throughout city
- ***Parks***
 - Litter pickup continues

- Mowing continues
- **Shop**
 - Normal repairs of city assets
 - Monthly 30-for-30 – All police and fire vehicles in good working condition
 - Mowing ditches

Police Department – for Mike Stelly

Chief Stelly gave the following statistics for the month of July, 2024:

- Traffic contacts: 392
- Crashes reported: 2
- Arrests: 39
- Reports: 36
- Calls for service: 536
- Miles driven: 11,978

Code Enforcement

Violations Investigated: 78

Violations filed w/Court: 11

Volunteer Fire Department – Simmie Gibson

Asst. Fire Chief Gibson reported the following activity for the department during the month of July, 2024:

- Structure Fire: 1
- Outside Fire: 1
- Combustible Leak: 1
- Extrication: 1
- Chemical Release: 2
- Medical Assist Calls: 5
- False Alarms: 5
- Smoke: 1
- Dispatched/Cancelled Enroute: 1
- Other: 1

General Administration – Theresa Van Meter

Mrs. Van Meter reported that registrations are now being accepted from last year's vendors for Holiday in the Park, and will be open to the public on August 20th.

Regular Session

Discussion and Possible Action on Orders by Resolution to either repair, remove or demolish the following structures:

2610 Tanglewood and 2832 Bonham- Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy to withdraw these properties from any action at this time. Council Member Brown seconded her motion. With there being no discussion, Mayor Branch called for a vote, with the motion passing unanimously.

2713 Stevenson – Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy, with a second from Council Member Brown to send Order by Resolution to property owner with a 90-day "cure" date to repair, remove or demolish structure on said property (November 10, 2024).

Council Member Brown commended Mr. Armstrong on the cleanup work that he has done so far on the property. She explained that this 90-day "cure" date will give him time to get things started, then he can come back to Council to report his progress and request additional time. Council assured Mr. Armstrong that they wished to assist him wherever possible in his efforts to rehabilitate the property.

As there was no further discussion, a vote was cast; motion carried.

Discussion and Possible Action on a Resolution approving the recommendation of the Selection Review Committee to award by resolution a contract for administrative services pertaining to the application and implementation, if awarded, of the City's 2025-2026 TxCDBG grant from the Texas Department of Agriculture and authorizing the execution of a contract - Council Member Brown made a motion to approve the recommendation of the Selection Review Committee to award, by resolution, a contract for administrative services pertaining to the application and implementation, if awarded, of the City's 2025-2026 TxCDBG grant from the Texas Department of Agriculture and authorizing the execution of a contract to **Traylor & Associates, Inc.** A second to this motion was made by

Council Member Shugart. With there being no discussion on the matter, Mayor Branch called for a vote on the motion, which passed unanimously.

Discussion and Possible Action on increasing call pay for WOVFD from \$10 per call to \$15 per call and meeting pay from \$5 per meeting to \$10 per meeting with a maximum of \$20 per meeting pay per month - Council Member Shugart moved that call pay for WOVFD be increased from \$10 per call to \$15 per call and meeting pay from \$5 per meeting to \$10 per meeting with a maximum of \$20 per meeting pay per month. Council Member Odom seconded this motion. Council Member Brown stated that this was a "no-brainer" for her in that the firefighters had been receiving the same pay for over 19 years. She thanked them for their service, as did all members of Council. The mayor then called for a vote, with the motion passing unanimously.

Mrs. Van Meter asked if this increase would take effect with the new budget year (October 1st) or immediately. The mayor responded, "immediately."

Discussion and Possible Action on accepting into record the Quarterly Investment Report for April – June, 2024 - Council Member Brown made a motion that the Quarterly Investment Report for April – June, 2024 be accepted into record as presented. A second to this motion was made by Council Member Odom. There was no discussion on the report, therefore the mayor called for a vote, with the motion passing unanimously.

Discussion and Possible Action on accepting recommendation from Public Works Director to award contract for mowing services – Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy made a motion that Council accept the Public Work's Director's recommendation to award a contract for mowing services to **South East Texas Lawn & Maintenance LLC**. Council Member Brown seconded her motion. Council Member Odom questioned if the properties to be mowed were vacant properties, ones with ordinance violation, etc. Mayor Branch responded that they are properties that are unkempt and the City will have them mown and then place a lien on the property. Mr. Sherwin will make the determination as to which properties those will be. With there being no further discussion, Mayor Branch called for a vote, with the motion passing unanimously.

Discussion and Possible Action on authorizing a proposal on an ad valorem tax rate by record vote and consider setting the date for a public hearing and the adoption of such proposal on a future meeting agenda – Council Member Shugart then stated that, "I move that we, by record vote, place a proposed tax rate of no greater than \$0.378000 per \$100 valuation on the Monday, September 9, 2024 Regular Meeting agenda at 5:00 p.m. at City Hall and set a public hearing on Thursday, September 5, 2024 at 5:15 p.m. at City Hall to receive comments on such proposal." This motion received a second from Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy.

Mayor Branch then called for a record vote:

Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy:	aye
Council Member Odom:	aye
Mayor Branch:	aye
Council Member Brown:	aye
Council Member Shugart:	aye

Motion passed unanimously.

Announcements

Mayor Branch then made note of the following:

- Public Hearing on Proposed Budget: Thursday, September 5, 2024; 5:00 p.m.
- Public Hearing on Proposed Tax Rate: Thursday, September 5, 2024; 5:15 p.m.
- Council Meeting: Monday, September 9, 2024; 5:00 p.m.

Adjournment

With there being no further business before Council, Mayor Branch adjourned the meeting at 5:45 p.m.



R R Branch
 Randy Branch, Mayor

ATTEST:

Theresa Van Meter
 Theresa Van Meter, City Secretary