



City of West Orange

City Hall
2700 Western Avenue
West Orange, TX 77630

City Council Workshop Session Meeting Minutes

Monday, August 4, 2025

6:30 p.m.

Council Chambers

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor Randy Branch
Meritta Kennedy

Jay Odom
Lanie Brown

Michael Shugart, Sr.
Gail Langton

APPOINTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Christopher Leavins
David Roberts

Theresa Van Meter

Simmie Gibson

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jane Branch
Gerald Thomas
Adam Apodaca
Dylan Gray
Clayton Baker
Billy Moore
Austin Mellen
Emily Mellen

Tessie Clark
Sharon Thomas
Kaitlyn Breaux
Guy Geuder
Tyler Roberts
James Fisette
Richard Jones
Benjamin Tannery

Mardie Thompson
Sybil Hughes
Daniel Diaz
Linda Kovatch
Dustin Hartsfield
William Lu
Christina Babcock

Call to Order

Mayor Branch called the workshop to order at 6:30 p.m. The invocation was given by Council Member Shugart, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American and Texas flags, led by Mayor Branch.

Workshop Agenda

Public Workshop to discuss possible formation of ESD for the Cities of West Orange and Pinehurst – Mayor Branch announced that, after due diligence, he does not believe an Emergency Services District would be able to supply services to West Orange and Pinehurst on the amount of tax money it would receive. He then stated that he was pulling his support for the ESD and he then asked Council to give a “yes” or “no” if they would like to do the same. As this was a workshop only, no action could be taken, but he wanted to get the consensus from the Council.

After each Council Member responded, Mayor Branch stated that the Council was unanimous in not going further with support for the formation of an ESD for the cities of West Orange and Pinehurst.

Asst. Chief Gibson asked if this issue would come up again in the future. The mayor responded that unless more money is available to fund it, he did not believe so. He added that the whole issue was to try to provide better fire protection services for the cities of West Orange and Pinehurst. If it were to happen, however, he felt that it would still most likely be a volunteer department.

Mayor Branch then reported that he had spoken with Orange County Judge John Gothia. He had information that says the map of the proposed ESD did not match the boundaries specified on the petition. The judge told the mayor that when the item comes up before Commissioners’ Court, he would state that it was “non-actionable” and the matter would be closed.

The mayor then asked if Council had any comments.

Council Member Brown stated that, in the event that this is a consideration of the future, that all members of the City Council be included from the beginning and not find out about it after the fact. She also felt that the Fire Department should be included in those discussions, as well.

Council Member Odom thanked everyone who showed up for this workshop. Mayor Branch stated that he had been asked if he wanted to cancel this workshop, but he did not. He wanted to give all of the citizens who were interested an opportunity to show up. He added that he expected the room to be full, by the amount of information that had been thrown out there against it and for it.

Mr. Jones asked the mayor if he would consider moving all Council Meetings to later in the day – 6:30. The mayor responded that he would take it under consideration.

Announcements

Mayor Branch then announced that the next Council meeting was scheduled for Monday, August 11, 2025 beginning at 5:00 p.m.

Adjournment

With there being no further discussion pertaining to the ESD before Council, Mayor Branch adjourned the meeting at 6:36 p.m.

R R Branch

Randy Branch, Mayor

ATTEST:

Theresa Van Meter
Theresa Van Meter, City Secretary

