



City of West Orange

City Hall
2700 Western Avenue
West Orange, TX 77630

City Council
Budget Workshop
Minutes

Monday, August 11, 2025 6:00 p.m. Council Chambers

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:
Mayor Randy Branch Michael Shugart, Sr. Jay Odom
Lanie Brown

OFFICIALS ABSENT:
Meritta Kennedy Gail Langton

APPOINTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:
Theresa Van Meter Jon Sherwin Mike Stelly
David Roberts Simmie Gibson

OTHERS PRESENT:
Jane Branch Mary Odom Tremaine Wilson
Richard Jones Jessie Romero Anna Seale

Call to Order

Mayor Branch called the workshop to order at 6:06 p.m.

Workshop

CITY OF WEST ORANGE, TEXAS				
2025-2026 PROPOSED BUDGET SUMMARY				
		Operations	Capital Outlay	Total
10	General Administration	\$ 505,976	\$ -	\$ 505,976
11	Building Official	92,905	-	\$ 92,905
12	Fire Department	159,044	-	\$ 159,044
13	Sanitation	628,509	-	\$ 628,509
14	Humane	87,155	-	\$ 87,155
15	Police	2,226,501	-	\$ 2,226,501
16	Municipal Court	197,357	-	\$ 197,357
17	Street	448,365	25,389	\$ 473,754
18	Parks & Facilities	80,413	-	\$ 80,413
21	Maintenance Shop	93,740	-	\$ 93,740
		\$ 4,519,965	\$ 25,389	\$ 4,545,354
	TOTAL REVENUE	\$	3,811,670	
	TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	\$	4,519,965	
	TOTAL CAPITAL OUTLAY		25,389	
			\$ 4,545,354	
	Potential shortfall	\$	(733,684)	
	(to be funded from prior years' retained income)			
	+Court Technology Fund Transfer	\$	9,986	
	+ Capital Imp. Fund Transfer		25,389	
			\$ (698,309)	
	NET POTENTIAL SHORTFALL	\$	(698,309)	

Mayor Branch explained that this proposed budget shows a potential shortfall of \$698,309. This is much lower than when work began on the budget. He also informed Council that he had cut more from the budget after packets were prepared so his budget is not the same as the one they are reviewing, which showed a potential shortfall of \$795,440.17.

He explained that he had reduced overtime allowances in all departments. The Police Department salary budget had included a 10% allowance for overtime. He cut it to 3%. The Public Works Department was 7% and is now 3%. General Administration had 3% overtime built in, and he decreased it to 1%. Those cuts resulted in a budget decrease of over \$74,000 just on the overtime total. Mrs. Van Meter added that there were also relative savings in Medicare, Social Security and Retirement, as well.

The mayor then stated that they could go through the document line by line item in revenue, if they would like to do so. He stated that the FY 2024 revenue totaled \$4,314,394.96, with \$3,817,590 budgeted. The City had a \$496,804.96 revenue overage that helped cover all of the expenses. City sales tax brought in \$126,345.48 more than budgeted. There was a \$44,229.56 sewer plant permit, road maintenance tax revenue was higher, sales tax higher, which meant road maintenance taxes were also higher. Entergy's franchise fees were \$20,000 over what had been forecast. Mayor Branch stated that he was trying to explain why the city's revenue was up in the last year. There was also over \$215,000 more interest earned at TexPool than anticipated. All of these items, and more, are why the City had almost \$500,000 more revenue than what was expected. He added that it was "a good thing because we actually spent \$4,194,362.31, when total revenues were forecast to be \$3,817,590 and budget expenditures were forecast to be \$5,010,329. He announced that the proposed budget cut back the possible shortfall to \$698,309. Each year we do this, and each year we always come out in the black. I haven't really figured out how we do that, but it has worked."

Mayor Branch announced that he had just found out that the City will not be able to collect money from liquor licenses anymore. The State took that away. It was not very much - about \$875 a year.

Council Member Brown questioned if the City's permit fees were in line with other comparable-sized cities in the area. Mr. Sherwin responded that they are comparable with other cities.

Before moving from budgeted revenues to expenditures, the mayor reiterated that a budget is simply a best estimate. He also reminded everyone that when they get their property tax bill and it is higher than it was last year, it is not the City doing that. The Orange County Appraisal District is appraising every property higher than before.

Council Member Brown questioned why nothing was budgeted for economic development for the upcoming year. The mayor explained that those membership dues would be paid from the Economic Development Corporation funds. There is money in the EDC account now.

Moving on to Building Official - A large decrease in funds budgeted to Abatement was noted. Those funds were for demolition, asbestos abatement etc. Council Member Odom asked why no funds were budgeted for mowing expenses for abandoned properties. Mr. Sherwin responded that he had to cut as much out as he could to decrease expenses.

The mayor moved page-by-page through the departments and there were no questions. Upon reaching the Police Department, Council Member Brown questioned if any of the salaries included overtime. Chief Stelly responded that it includes 3% budgeted for overtime, and that it also included Holiday Pay for those officers who have to work on those days. Council Member Brown then asked him how he was able to decrease the "Dispatch" budget from \$21,000 to \$15,000. Chief Stelly responded that he had negotiated the cost down.

Mayor Branch asked Mr. Sherwin how many employees he had in each department. Mr. Sherwin responded, "Two in Street Department, one in Sanitation, one in Humane, one in Parks, one in Building Official Department and one in Maintenance." The mayor added, "Jon does a good job of making sure his men are flexible enough to work wherever they are needed."

Council Member Odom stated that he had a very minor question...pertaining to the "Auto Cleaning line item. It dropped from \$1,000 in the current budget to \$250 in the proposed budget. Chief Stelly explained that they are using Grand Slam Car Wash. They do not charge them. There are occasions, however, when issues of a different type occur that need to be

addressed/cleaned...such as when there is an “accidental discharge” by someone being detained in the back seat.

The mayor then pointed out that all Capital Expenditures in the Police Department were cut, as well.

While reviewing the Street Department’s proposed budget, Council Member Brown questioned what expense was anticipated from the Equipment/Property item under “Capital Outlay.” Mr. Sherwin responded that those funds are used when some type of needed maintenance equipment comes up at auction.

With there being no questions or comments on the Parks/Facilities and Maintenance Departments, Mayor Branch announced that Council would be voting on the budget at the end of the budget hearing on September 4th. The vote on the tax rate will be held at the September Council meeting (Sept. 8th.) The mayor asked each Council Member to take the budget home and study it. If they have any questions, he encouraged them to ask. Mrs. Van Meter added that she would have the updated proposed budgets in Council Members’ mailboxes in her office after lunch the following day.

Assistant Fire Chief Gibson then expressed his concern over the large decrease in the Equipment/Tools line item, as well as the cut in the Equipment/Engine Repair line.

Announcements

Mayor Branch then made note of the following upcoming meetings:

- Thursday, Sept. 4, 2025; 5:00 p.m. – Public Hearing on Proposed Budget
(Adoption of Budget at conclusion of hearing)
- Thursday, Sept. 4, 2025; 5:15 p.m. – Public Hearing on Proposed Tax Rate
- Monday, Sept. 8, 2025; 5:00 p.m. – Council Meeting
(Adoption of Tax Rate on Agenda)

Adjournment

With there being no further business before Council, Mayor Branch adjourned the meeting at 6:57 p.m.



Randy Branch, Mayor

ATTEST:



Theresa Van Meter, City Secretary

