



City of West Orange

City Hall
2700 Western Avenue
West Orange, TX 77630

City Council
Special Session
Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 27, 2025 6:01 p.m. Council Chambers

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Randy Branch	Meritta Kennedy	Jay Odom
Michael Shugart, Sr.	Lanie Brown	

COUNCIL MEMBER ABSENT:

Gail Langton

APPOINTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Jon Sherwin	Theresa Van Meter	Mike Stelly
Simmie Gibson	David Roberts	Chris Leavins

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jane Branch	Mary Odom	Tyler Roberts
James Fisette	Simmie Gibson	Richard Jones
Dylan Gray	Richard Bland	Clayton Baker
Kelton Hutsell		

Call to Order

Mayor Branch called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. and announced that a quorum was present. As the invocation and pledges were given at the meeting just prior to this one, the mayor waived them.

Executive Session

Closed Meeting to Deliberate the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property if deliberation in an open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the position of the governmental body in negotiations with a third person, under Section 551.072 of the Act – Discussion of possible EDC land purchase to be used for future development

Council entered into Executive Session at 6:02 p.m. Special Session was reconvened at the conclusion of the Executive Session, which ended at 6:24 p.m.

Special Session

Discussion and Possible Action, if necessary, as a result of Executive - Mayor Branch reported that there was no action to be taken as a result of the Executive Session.

Discussion and Possible Action on accepting a \$300,000 grant from the Texas Forest Service toward the purchase of a new fire truck, and if approved, the maximum amount authorized for the City's grant match – Council Member Brown made a motion to accept the \$300,000 grant from the Texas Forest Service toward the purchase of a new fire truck, and if approved to set the maximum amount authorized for the City's grant match. Council Member Shugart seconded her motion.

Council Member Odom stated that he did not believe the City should buy a custom or commercial truck just because a grant was received. He stated that his opinion was that it would not be fiscally responsible of the City to spend money on a big fire truck.

Council Member Brown stated that the "new" fire truck is a couple of years old now and a 23-year-old truck that would be 25 years old by the time a new truck could get here. She added that it is not a matter of "if" it will go out, but "when," and it will soon be very difficult, if not impossible to get parts for it. Should something happen to the "new" truck, the City would not have a backup truck. She stated that, as a property owner in West Orange, she would not like to find herself or her neighbors in that position.

Council Member Shugart asked if this grant is not accepted, would the City be able to get another one in the future. Asst. Fire Chief Gibson responded, "probably not." He also reported that the city has been awarded the \$300,000 grant for a tanker truck, and also a \$45,000 grant for a skid unit. Each requires the City to pay a 5% match.

Asst. Chief Gibson stated that he felt he would be doing a dis-service to the citizens if he used the grant money to buy something new, rather than replacing something old that could potentially go bad.

Council Member Odom stated that he believed parts for the old truck could be retro-fitted. He added that, with as much money as was spent on the new truck, it did not even have a backup alarm on it to help prevent the recent accident. He stated that, "the old truck can be fixed many, many times over for the amount of money that would be spent on buying a new truck."

Asst. Chief Gibson explained that the deadline for accepting the grant was the next day (Oct. 28, 2025). The City is allowed one year to fund it, with the possibility of one extension.

Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy stated that, in order for the skid to operate, the City would have to have at least a one-ton truck, which would be another purchase.

Asst. Chief Gibson reported that he has been getting quotes on both custom and commercial trucks.

Council Member Odom explained that the City just adopted the 2025-2026 budget. Every department in the City had to cut their budget requests. He added that he has found a brand-new, never used 2024 fire truck on fentonfire.com ready to go for \$200,000.

Mayor Branch stated that he was going to tell everyone "where the City is at, right now." The City is about to run out of money to pay bills. He further stated that all departments, including the fire department, will have to stop spending ANY money unless the purchase is absolutely essential until the General Fund can be built back up. "We will probably end up dipping into funds that we don't like to use – our Capital Improvement Fund and our Disaster Fund. Those funds are there for a reason. We have to be fiscally responsible, and I cannot see any way of doing that by spending another \$200,000 or \$600,000 out of those funds when we don't know if we will be able to pay our bills through the end of the year." He then gave the balances of unrestricted City accounts. "We do have money in the bank, but that money is there because we set up those accounts to fund what the City needs and has to have...and it looks right now like that is to pay bills...and that is going to go down pretty quickly. Right now, I just do not see us investing money in a fire truck."

Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy stated that she does believe that the City should accept the grant.

Fire Chief Roberts explained that if the grant is accepted, that will start the process. "We would find out what you want to buy and then go out for bids." Asst. Chief Gibson stated that "you have a year and one extension.

Mayor Branch asked Mrs. Van Meter to repeat Council Member Brown's motion, which was "to accept the \$300,000 grant from the Texas Forest Service toward the purchase of a new fire truck, and if approved to set the maximum amount authorized for the City's grant match." Mr. Leavins stated that if the City wants to move forward, the maximum amount needs to be included.

Council Member Brown amended her motion to include the maximum amount authorized for the City's grant match at \$15,000. Council Member Shugart seconded her amended motion.

Mayor Branch then called for a vote on the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Announcements

Mayor Branch then announced:

- Holiday in the Park - Saturday, November 1, 2025
- the next meeting of the City Council would be Monday, November 10, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.

Adjournment

With there being no further business before Council, the mayor adjourned the meeting at 6:50 p.m. after a motion to do so was made by Council Member Shugart, followed by a second from Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy.



Randy Branch
Randy Branch, Mayor

ATTEST:

Theresa Van Meter
Theresa Van Meter, City Secretary