



City of West Orange

City Hall
2700 Western Avenue
West Orange, TX 77630

City Council Special Session Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 17, 2025

5:00 p.m.

Council Chambers

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Randy Branch
Michael Shugart, Sr.

Meritta Kennedy
Lanie Brown

Jay Odom
Gail Langton

APPOINTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Jon Sherwin
David Roberts

Theresa Van Meter
Simmie Gibson

Mike Stelly
Chris Leavins

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jane Branch
James Fiset
Richard Bland

M.B. Weems
Blake Breau
Richard Jones

Tyler Roberts
Kaitlyn Breau

Call to Order

Mayor Branch called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Council Member Shugart gave the invocation followed by the Mayor leading the Pledges of Allegiance to both the United States and Texas flags.

Special Agenda

Discussion and Possible Action on authorizing purchase of fire truck – Mayor Branch stated that, as this was a Special Called meeting, there was only one thing on the agenda to discuss – authorizing the purchase of a fire truck.

Asst. Fire Chief Gibson stated that this document was not really a “bid” as “we didn’t go out for bids.” Mr. Sherwin responded that this was a quote, as bids were not necessary on this particular vehicle, because the quote was from HGAC.

Fire Chief Roberts stated that this truck was useless for the City of West Orange. He added, “this is not what we need. It would be a waste of money.” He stated that there was no place on this truck to put their equipment. Mayor Branch asked the chief if this truck were taken to a fire, could it be used to fight the fire. The chief responded, “I don’t want it.” Mayor Branch responded, “That was not the question I asked.” Chief Roberts then stated “Halfway. The pump is only a 500 gpm pump. Buying this truck would make the City’s ISO rating go up.”

Asst. Chief Gibson stated that they want a backup truck for Engine 1. If Engine 1 goes down, this truck would not cover it. There is no place for equipment, ladder, hoses or anything else.

Chief Roberts stated that this truck is made for hauling water if you lived out in a rural area. “This is basically a water truck. We have fire hydrants.” Asst. Chief Gibson stated, “We need to replace an engine. This is not an engine. This truck is made strictly to shuttle water. It is not made to fight a fire.” Mayor Branch stated that this grant was for a water tender. Asst. Chief Gibson agreed, but added that the purchase could be upgraded to a pumper tanker. He added that, “even if this truck had a hose bed and larger pump, it would still be a water tender.”

Mayor Branch agreed that the truck could be upgraded...if you have the money to upgrade it, which the City does not have. He added that the City really does not have the additional \$70,000 needed to add to the grant to pay for this truck. Chief Roberts then stated, “then y’all can just keep your money. It’s not what we need. It’s not what we want.” Asst. Chief Gibson added that, “you might as well throw away the grant. You will never get another one. We need to replace Engine 10.” Mayor Branch responded, “what you need and what the City can afford are two different things. Y’all keep saying that we can get something that we cannot afford. We are using money from other funds just to pay the bills.” He added that the City’s funds, at this

time, were a limited resource. He also stated, "If this won't help you, that is your choice. Decide whether you do, or do not, want it."

Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy asked, "This grant is good for one year, correct?" Asst. Fire Chief Gibson responded, "yes, but they want you to be in the process of ordering it way before a year." This is because it takes so long to get one built.

Council Member Brown stated, "If this doesn't suit the needs to the City for the Fire Department in order to effectively fight fires, I don't believe we even need to spend the extra \$70,000 in purchasing it and see if there are any other options. If this does not give them what they need, I don't believe we need to do it."

Asst. Chief Gibson stated that if Engine 10 was in better shape, it would be a different story, but Engine 10 is unreliable. It has electrical problems that come and go.

Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy made a motion to not authorize the purchase of this fire truck. The motion received a second from Council Member Brown. Mayor Branch asked if there were any further comments.

Asst. Chief Gibson stated that the "going thing around here is somebody has to die for somebody to get something for the Fire Department." Mayor Branch responded that he "took exception to that," adding that they have a brand-new truck and the City has been spending money on all the equipment needed. He then asked what they wanted to do when the money is not there. The mayor then added that he was "willing to spend money on repairing the truck that's out there, but the City can't afford to spend what the Fire Chief and Asst. Fire Chief are saying they have to have in order to purchase a fire truck. I'm not going to do it and I'll vote against it every day."

Firefighter Tyler Roberts then stated, "The City could do what every other city does in the County. They finance the fire trucks so they do not have to pay the full amount up front. This does work. You can break the payments into smaller amounts. In 2022, the City spent \$150,000 on police cars and in 2023 \$220,000. That is the same price you are spending here for a fire truck. I believed this is an option Council should consider."

Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy then stated that she wanted to amend her motion to say, "We do not authorize the purchase of this particular fire truck, but that we look at other options." Council Member Brown seconded the amendment to the original motion.

Mayor Branch asked if there was any further discussion. With there being none, he called for a vote on the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment

The mayor then adjourned the meeting. The time was at 5:15 p.m.


 Randy Branch, Mayor

ATTEST:


 Theresa Van Meter, City Secretary

