



City of West Orange

City Hall
2700 Western Avenue
West Orange, TX 77630

City Council
Regular Session
Meeting Minutes

Monday, August 10, 2026 5:00 p.m. Council Chambers

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

APPOINTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Jon Sherwin	Christopher Leavins	Theresa Van Meter
Simmie Gibson		

OTHERS PRESENT:

Alan Bates	Crystal Bates	Michael Bourgeois
Richard Bland	Blake Breaux	James Fisette
Richard Jones	Kathy Bourgeois	Jane Branch
Gerald Thomas	Sharon Thomas	Nina Maddox
Tremaine Wilson		

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.

He then asked that everyone please keep the McDonald family in their prayers, explaining that longtime West Orange Mayor Roy McDonald passed away the day before. He spent thirty years in city business.

Consent Agenda

Discussion and Possible Action on approval of the minutes of the July 13, 2026 and July 20, 2026 Council Meetings – A motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy to accept the July 13, 2026 and July 20, 2026 minutes as presented, with one correction to the July 20th minutes. This motion received a second from Council Member Brown. A vote was cast, with motion passing unanimously.

Staff Reports

Public Works – Jon Sherwin

Mr. Sherwin reported the following activities for the month of July, 2026:

- **Construction Projects**
 - Waste Water Treatment Plant construction is 88% complete and on schedule.
 - Burnett Street railroad crossing work complete
- **Building Official**
 - 11 permits issued
 - 23 permits completed
- **Sanitation**
 - 18 loads of green waste collected
 - 1 load of C&D to landfill
- **Animal Control**
 - 95 calls
 - 10 intakes
 - 1 claimed / 4 adopted / 12 rescued
 - 1 court filing
- **Street**
 - Patching of Streets and driveways
 - Cleaning ditches (1,600')

- **Parks**
 - Mowing
 - Debris pickup
- **Shop**
 - Normal repairs and maintenance of City assets
 - Monthly 30-for-30 – all Police and Fire Vehicles in good working condition

Mr. Sherwin also reported that the Texas Parks & Wildlife grant application previously approved by Council has been submitted.

Police Department

In Chief Stelly’s absence, Mr. Sherwin reported the following Police Department activities for the month of July, 2026:

- Traffic contacts: 97
- Crashes reported: 7
- Arrests: 12
- Reports: 28
- Calls for service: 319
- Miles driven: 9,824

Code Enforcement

Violations Investigated: 14
Violations filed w/Court: 3

General Administration – City Secretary Theresa Van Meter

Mrs. Van Meter reported that booth registrations are now open to the public for the October 24, 2026 Holiday in the Park festival.

Fire Department – Asst. Chief Simmie Gibson

Asst. Chief Gibson reported the following activities for the month of July, 2026

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| • Outside fire: | 1 |
| • Gas leak | 1 |
| • Accident | 1 |
| • Service calls | 5 |
| • Dispatched and cancelled enroute | 1 |
| • Unintentional alarm | 2 |
| • Vicinity alarm: | 1 |
| • Alarm malfunction: | 2 |

Council Comments

Council Member Odom requested that the possibility of having a traffic signal installed at the intersection of Western Avenue and Irving Street be addressed. He added that vehicles are going straight through the stop signs there. Mayor Branch asked Mr. Sherwin to look into the possibility of getting a traffic signal at this location.

Regular Session

Discussion and Possible Action on extending variance to Ordinance No. 302-F issued to Alan and Crystal Bates (1122 Albany) on June 8, 2026 – Mrs. Bates stated that she had received written consent from the property owner, Bryan Wood, to demolish the house on this property. As this authorization had not been notarized, Mrs. Bates was asked to get an authorization notarized by both Mr. Wood and either Mrs. Bates or her husband.

Mr. Leavins stated that the Orange County Appraisal District shows a lien on this property from many years ago. It has most likely been satisfied by this time, but it still shows up on the OCAD website. Council asked the Bates to look into this, as well.

No action was taken on this variance extension request.

Presentation by Mr. Michael Bourgeois (5017 Lawndale) regarding the condition of neighboring property at 5009 Lawndale, along with stray cat problems originating from

same address – Mr. Bourgeois reported that the City's Humane Officer, Chuck Davis, has taken care of the cat issue. He has picked up at least twenty cats in that location. Mr. Bourgeois stated that he has spent over \$1,200 in vet bills because his dog had parasites due to all of those cats using his yard as a litter box.

He then distributed photos showing the condition of the property next door, adding that he was sure no one on Council would want to live next door to that mess. He also presented a photo of the concrete curb in front of his house that was broken up when his neighbor drove his work truck over it to get into his own yard.

Mayor Branch thanked Mr. Bourgeois for attending and bringing these issues to Council's attention. He added that these complaints had not fallen on deaf ears. He asked Mr. Sherwin to look into this problem, and to also bring in the City's Code Enforcement Officer for his input.

Discussion and Possible Action on the purchase of a tender truck using grant funds awarded through the Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program (also known as HB 2604 Grant Program and administered by the Texas A&M Forest Service) – Council Member Brown made a motion as follows, "I move that the City Council approve the purchase of the Deep South fire truck, as presented at a base purchase price of \$482,200, which meets or exceeds the applicable minimum standards and specifications for firefighting vehicles established under the Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program, commonly known as the HB 2604 Grant Program and administered by the Texas A&M Forest Service.

The purchase shall utilize the City's \$300,000 HB 2604 grant award, subject to the applicable 95/5 cost-share requirements and all other terms and conditions of the grant.

I further move that the Council authorize payment of the applicable \$1,500 BuyBoard fee, for a total authorized acquisition cost of \$483,700, with the City's anticipated financial responsibility not to exceed \$183,700, subject to final confirmation of grant-eligible costs and requirements by the Texas A&M Forest Service.

I further move that the Public Works Director be authorized to facilitate the lawful disposition of Engine 10, in accordance with applicable City policy and Texas law, and that all net proceeds received from the disposition of Engine 10 be applied to offset the City's financial responsibility associated with the acquisition of the new fire truck."

Her motion was seconded by Council Member Shugart.

Council Member Brown reported that she and Mr. Sherwin had contacted "Garage," which is an emergency response vehicle brokerage firm. Mr. Sherwin explained that, with the information he provided to them on Engine 10, they have determined that the market value for the truck to be \$130,000. Mayor Branch added that Garage does charge a 10% fee for their services. Council Member Brown added that they were told that the truck could actually sell anywhere between \$110,000 and \$170,000. Their turn-around time averages twenty-eight (28) days. Also, the City would maintain possession of the vehicle until it is sold.

Council Member Brown provided each council member a copy of the proposal from Deep South. Anticipating \$100,000 in proceeds from the sale of Engine 10, and if the City chooses the Standard Configuration shown on the proposal, the City's cost share would be \$83,700. If Council chooses the Two-Tone Blue/Silver proposal, the City's cost share would be \$91,700, as there is an additional charge of \$8,000 for the blue and silver paint.

Mayor Branch questioned why there was a charge for the paint color change for this truck, but not for the one the City already bought from them. Assistant Chief Gibson explained that the truck previously purchased had not yet been painted when the blue color was selected. The truck presently being discussed has already been painted red.

The mayor asked how long it would take to get the truck. Asst. Chief Gibson believed it would be a "couple" of months.

Mayor Branch then brought up the City's Procurement Policy, which was not followed during this procedure. Council Member Brown interjected that this is through BuyBoard. The mayor understood that, but was concerned that the bidding procedure/policy adopted by Council was not followed. Assistant Chief Gibson reported that he had received three bids, two from Siddons-Martin and one from Deep South.

The mayor read portions of the policy aloud that outlined the process for bid specifications, proposal requests and circulation of these requests. He added that Council had not reviewed these specifications. Council Member Brown stated that she had reviewed them. She also

added that it was not necessary to go out for bids, as they were going through BuyBoard. Mr. Sherwin agreed that the bidding process was not necessary when going through BuyBoard as long as the specific vehicle in question was listed with BuyBoard.

Mayor Branch expressed his concern that the procurement process was not followed. The requirements of this policy are for the protection of the City.

Council Member Brown expressed her frustration, in that she, along with the mayor, Mr. Sherwin and Council Member Shugart met with members of the fire department at which time the mayor told Asst. Chief Gibson to "go out and get bids," which he did. She stated that they should have been provided with the policy requirements at that time. She was concerned that the entire process would have to begin again. Mayor Branch responded that he was not saying that the process should begin again, but in the future the required procedures should be followed.

Council Member Brown stated that clear guidance is needed, from the City Attorney or someone, as the policy clearly states that, "Bidding is not necessary if buying off of a contract pricing system such as HGAC, BuyBoard..." She then questioned if the City Secretary should submit the request through BuyBoard. Mr. Leavins stated that as long as it is complying with one of the boards, legally he felt that it was "OK." He added that if further clarification of the policy is desired, it could be revamped or revised to be clearer.

Mr. Sherwin explained that BuyBoard may have ten vehicles listed by Deep South. As long as the City's specifications meet one of those ten vehicles, it can be purchased without any issues. Mayor Branch then asked Asst. Chief Gibson if the City is "OK" in this. He responded, "Yes, this is done every day by every manufacturer..."

Mr. Leavins questioned if there were any bidding specifications required by this grant. Asst. Chief Gibson responded that the only requirement is that the vehicle be purchased from a dealer within the state of Texas.

Mrs. Van Meter then questioned Council Member Brown regarding her motion – was it for the red truck, or to include the additional \$8,000 for it to be painted blue. Council Member Brown responded that it was for the red truck. Should Council decide that they want the truck to be painted blue and silver, that would require a second motion.

Mayor Branch questioned Council as to where the City's portion (\$83,700) was going to come from. Council Members Shugart and Brown both responded, "Capital Outlay." Council Member Brown said a loan could be obtained, but then the City would have to pay interest on it, increasing the cost.

Council Member Brown then stated, "If we wait a few years until we have no choice but to purchase a new fire truck, you're looking at seven hundred-, eight hundred-, nine hundred-thousand dollars that we would have to pay completely out-of-pocket, or now we have one that, without selling Engine 10, we're looking at paying \$183,000 for, or if we are able to sell Engine 10 for \$100,000 approximately, then we're looking at paying \$83,000. It would be a huge tax burden on the citizens of West Orange to have to pay \$800,000 for something that we could have gotten for \$83,000 a few years prior."

Council Member Odom questioned the projected revenue from selling Engine 10. Mr. Sherwin responded that the market value, per Garage, is \$130,000...but it could bring in as much as \$170,000. Council Member Brown added that Garage will get a 10% "success" fee, but you do not pay if the vehicle is not sold. Council Member Odom then questioned, "What do we do if it doesn't sell? The City would still be responsible for the \$183,700.... or can the City not accept the new truck until the old truck is sold?" Council Member Brown responded, "Or in five years when we have to replace that vehicle, we spend \$900,000 when we could have spent \$183,700... Do you want the taxpayers to pay \$900,000 or do you want them to pay \$183,000?"

Council Member Odom then stated that the City does not actually need this fire truck.

Council Member Kennedy did want it on record that she was not in favor of paying an additional \$8,000 for blue paint.

Council Member Shugart asked when the determination would need to be made whether to use Capital Outlay, or take out a loan. Mr. Sherwin explained that First Financial and USDA offered the same interest rate (4.75%). USDA has more criteria to be met. Their loan is based on the City's tax revenue. The process going through the USDA takes 64 – 153 business days. First

Financial would hold the truck as collateral and would be willing to loan up to \$200,000 for a three-year term. That would be done in less than 30 days.

Council Member Odom stated that he, the mayor and Mr. Sherwin were in a meeting with Traylor & Associates, who told them that there would be no future penalty to the City should this grant not be accepted. Council Member Odom stated that the Council recently voted (with a “nay” vote from him) to allow for an increase in the number of gaming machines within the City. He was told at that time that it was approved because the City “needs the money.” The mayor explained that when the City gets into October, November and December, the money coming in to the City decreases. The Capital Improvement Fund will have to be the City’s “fallback” if needed to pay bills. He added that, “We can go ahead and buy that truck if that is what you want to do, but I do not want the responsibility of being the one that puts the City in debt. It may be two or three years from now, when the City can’t pay all of its bills because we’ve used up all of the Capital Improvement Fund.” Council Member Shugart replied, “then take a loan out.”

Council Member Odom stated that there are already a lot of politicians saying they are going to eliminate property tax, and now DuPont has already cut what they pay the City because the Appraisal District has re-assessed what they have. There is so much less money coming in to the City right now compared to just a few years ago. He does not feel that it would be fiscally responsible to go into debt at this time. If things pick up, the City could apply for another grant.

Council Member Brown stated that she has done grant work for twelve years, and she knows for a fact that grants are given on a point system. Entities do get denied because they turn down grants. It is very competitive. She added that she does not feel that this opportunity will come around again in the present Council’s lifetime for this much money to be pushed out to rural fire departments. Council Member Odom agreed that this grant is a good thing...but his concern is how the City will pay their share. Council Member Shugart replied, “Take out a loan.” Council Member Odom responded, “How are you going to pay the loan?”

Mayor Branch stated that the only way he would be “for” this, would be if the City received a sizeable amount for the sale of Engine 10. He then asked Council Member Brown if she would be willing to amend her motion to make it contingent on the “official” appraisal of Engine 10. She responded that her concern with that would be that then Council would have to wait and come back in another month. She added that she has already based everything on the low end of the value, \$100,000. She stated that she could amend her motion for \$100,000, but we still do not know that it will sell for that. She said she could amend it for \$130,000, but what if it does not sell for that either. She asked if the City were only to get \$120,000, would that kill the deal?

The mayor then stated that he would ask for a record vote on this motion:

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

With the majority of the votes in favor of the motion, the motion carried.

The mayor then asked Council Member Brown if she wanted to make a second motion for the blue and silver paint. She responded that the truck is already red, and she is fine with that.

Discussion and Possible Action on acknowledging receipt of the Statement of 2026 No-New-Revenue and Voter-Approval Tax Rates w/corresponding worksheets – Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy made a motion that receipt of the Statement of 2026 No-New-Revenue and Voter-Approval Tax Rates w/corresponding worksheets be acknowledged and filed as received from the Orange County Tax Assessor-Collector, Octavia Guzman. Council Member Brown seconded this motion. The mayor then called for a vote, with the motion passing unanimously.

Discussion and Possible Action on accepting into record the Quarterly Investment Report for April – June, 2026 - Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy made a motion to accept into record the Quarterly Investment Report for April – June, 2026. A second to this motion was made by Council Member Brown. With there being no discussion, Mayor Branch called for a vote on the motion, which passed unanimously.

Discussion and Possible Action on approval of the 2026-2027 Articles of Agreement between the City of West Orange and the West Orange Municipal Police Association, Inc. (effective 10.01.2026) – A motion was made by Council Member Brown to approve the 2026-2027

Articles of Agreement between the City of West Orange and the West Orange Municipal Police Association, Inc., which will go into effect 10.01.2026. Council Member Shugart seconded her motion. Mayor Branch pointed out that the only change between the 2024-2026 agreement and the 2026-2027 agreement was that, should the City give pay raises to other departments, the Police Department will receive the same raise. Otherwise, the pay rates remain the same as the 2024-2026 agreement.

With there being no further discussion, Mayor Branch called for a vote on the motion, which passed 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 Brown made the following motion: “I move that we, by record vote, place a proposed tax rate of no greater than \$0.424515 per \$100 valuation on the Monday, September 13, 2026 Regular Meeting agenda at 5:00 p.m. at City Hall and set a Public Hearing on Thursday, September 10, 2026 at 5:15 p.m. at City Hall to receive comments on such proposal.” This motion received a second by Mayor Pro-Tem Kennedy.

With there being no discussion, a record vote was cast:

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

With the “aye” vote being unanimous, the motion carried.

Announcements

Mayor Branch made note of the following:

1. Public Hearing on Proposed 2026-2027 Budget – Thursday, September 10, 2026; 5:00 p.m. (A vote on the proposed Budget will be taken at conclusion of hearing.)
2. Public Hearing on Proposed 2026 Tax Rate – Thursday, September 10, 2026; 5:15 p.m.
3. Council Meeting – Monday, September 14, 2026; 5:00 p.m.
4. Registrations now being accepted for “Holiday in the Park” – (Saturday, Oct. 24, 2026)

Adjournment

With there being no further business before Council, Mayor Branch adjourned the meeting at 5:56 p.m.

ATTEST:


Theresa Van Meter
Theresa Van Meter, City Secretary

R.R. Branch
Randy Branch, Mayor