

**CITY OF DRIPPING SPRINGS**

**ORDINANCE 2021-**

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF DRIPPING SPRINGS, TEXAS, (“CITY”) ENACTING A TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON THE ACCEPTANCE, AUTHORIZATION, AND APPROVALS NECESSARY FOR THE SUBDIVISION, SITE PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, AND CONSTRUCTION IN THE CITY LIMITS AND EXTRATERRITORIAL JURISDICTION, PROVIDING FOR FINDINGS OF FACT, DEFINITIONS, APPLICABILITY, PURPOSE, ENACTMENT, DURATION, EXTENSION, EXCEPTIONS AND EXEMPTIONS, DETERMINATION AND APPEALS, REPEALER, SEVERABILITY, ENFORCEMENT, EFFECTIVE DATE, AND PROPER NOTICE AND MEETING.**

**WHEREAS,** the City Council of the City of Dripping Springs (“City Council”) as a duly-elected legislative body, finds that it is facing significant historic and contemporary land use challenges that existing regulations were not designed to address; and

**WHEREAS,** the City Council finds that it is in the best interest of the City and its citizens to adopt and enact a moratorium in order to temporarily suspend the acceptance, authorization, and approvals necessary for the subdivision, site planning, development, zoning, and construction on real property in the City limits and extraterritorial jurisdiction; and

**WHEREAS,** the City has developed a Comprehensive Plan for development within the City and desires to protect its ability to regulate development within its jurisdiction; and

**WHEREAS,** the City has started the process of revisiting the Comprehensive Plan and studying land use and development in the City limits and extraterritorial jurisdiction, and has issued a Request for Qualifications for a professional land planning firm to provide comprehensive plan and development code services; and

**WHEREAS,** Texas Local Government Code Section 51.001 provides the City general authority to adopt an Ordinance or police regulations that is for the good government, peace or order of the City and is necessary or proper for carrying out a power granted by law to the City; and

**WHEREAS,** Texas Local Government Code Chapters 211, 213, 214, and 217 grant the City certain regulation authority concerning construction, land use, nuisances, structures and development-related activities; and

- WHEREAS**, the City seeks to ensure that impending and future development is conducted in a fiscally-sustainable and environmentally responsible manner; and
- WHEREAS**, the City Limits and Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) are comprised of a combination of topographical, ecological, and drainage features that create significant development challenges; and
- WHEREAS**, the City will change drastically if continued growth and development should occur under the City's existing Code of Ordinances and Comprehensive Plan, which no longer adequately address concerns about the effect of responsible development in the City and ETJ; and
- WHEREAS**, as codified in Tex. Water Code § 26.081(a), the Legislature of the State of Texas found and declared that it is necessary to the health, safety, and welfare of the people of this state to implement the state policy to encourage and promote the development and use of regional and area-wide waste collection, treatment, and disposal systems to serve the waste disposal needs of the citizens of the state and to prevent pollution and maintain and enhance the quality of the water in the state; and
- WHEREAS**, the City agrees with the Legislature of the State of Texas that it is necessary to the health, safety, and welfare of the people in the City limits and the ETJ to encourage and promote the development and use of regional and area-wide waste collection, treatment, and disposal systems to serve the waste disposal needs of the citizens in the City limits and the ETJ to prevent pollution and maintain and enhance the quality of the water in the City limits and the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction; and
- WHEREAS**, the City conducted an analysis to determine the adequacy of the City's current regional wastewater facilities and the need beyond the estimated capacity that is expected to result from new property development; and
- WHEREAS**, upon review of the analysis by the City's Wastewater Engineer and Deputy City Administrator, the City Council has made findings contained herein as **Attachment "B"** related to the inadequacy of existing essential public facilities in accordance with Section 212.135 of the Texas Local Government Code; and
- WHEREAS**, the City Council finds that certain essential public and private infrastructure, being wastewater facilities and improvements and transportation facilities and improvements throughout the City Limits and ETJ, are inadequate and insufficient to adequately serve new development; and
- WHEREAS**, relying on the analysis provided by City Staff, the outstanding permits issued by the City prior to this moratorium, and the City's impact fee analysis, the City Council makes the following findings:

1. Taking into account all wastewater that has been committed by contract, the City's wastewater facilities are at capacity; and
2. The current wastewater collection system has bottlenecks that threaten the proper operation of the City's regional wastewater system; and
3. Based on these bottlenecks and the contractual commitments that will utilize all additional capacity of the City's regional wastewater plant, there is currently no additional capacity available to commit to development of lots; and
4. This moratorium is reasonably limited to property located in the City limits and the ETJ.

**WHEREAS,** until actions can be taken to increase the wastewater capacity of the City of Dripping Springs, allowing for additional wastewater service connections to the Dripping Springs Wastewater Treatment Plant(s) service area will only exacerbate the situation; and

**WHEREAS,** the City Council finds that a temporary moratorium on the acceptance, authorization, and approvals necessary for the subdivision, site planning, development, and construction in the City Limits and ETJ will prevent the situation from becoming worse, and will allow the City time to address the measures needed to remedy the shortage of capacity and to secure funds to pay for such remedial measures; and

**WHEREAS,** additional evaluation of the existing infrastructure and development are needed to allow for growth and development within the City Limits and ETJ while protecting the health, safety, environment, quality of life, and general welfare of its residents; and

**WHEREAS,** the City desires to study and evaluate the impact of further development; the need for additional wastewater facilities; appropriate zoning districts and district regulations; appropriate land use and wastewater regulations; and issues that will affect future growth and development of the area within its jurisdiction; and

**WHEREAS,** the City finds this evaluation process will require community input and will take a reasonable amount of time to complete; and

**WHEREAS,** the City has determined that it is necessary to study and update its development ordinances and procedures in order to clarify and improve its planning policies based on the forthcoming regulations, strengthen the connection between the City's Code of Ordinances and the goals and needs of the City's residents, and to protect the health, safety, environment, quality of life, and general welfare of its residents; and

**WHEREAS,** in order for the City to have adequate and reasonable time to review, evaluate, and revise the City's development ordinances, and to consider the impact of the ordinances upon future growth, public health and safety, development, the natural environment, and place of architectural, and ecological importance and significance

within the City Limits and ETJ, the City wishes to maintain the *status quo* by implementing a temporary moratorium, during which certain applications for development permits and/or approvals will be suspended; and

**WHEREAS**, the purpose of prohibiting certain applications for development permits and/or approvals during this study period includes, within limitation, preserving the *status quo* during the planning process, eliminating incentives for hurried applications, facilitating thoughtful and consistent planning, avoiding exploitation of the delays inherent in the municipal legislative process, and preventing applications from undermining the effectiveness of the revised rules by applying for permits and/or approvals in order to avoid the application of new, possibly more restrictive, development regulations; and

**WHEREAS**, in recognition of the importance of development permits and/or approvals to the community, the City desires to implement this moratorium for a stated and fixed time period, and to include a waiver provision in accordance with Local Government Code Chapter 212, Subchapter E; and

**WHEREAS**, all notices and hearings, including a hearing by the Planning & Zoning Commission, have been published and held in accordance with applicable statutes, laws, and regulations; and

**WHEREAS**, based on the findings contained herein, information provided by City staff, and the evidence submitted at public hearings, the City Council has determined that existing development ordinances and regulations and other applicable laws are inadequate to prevent existing essential public facilities from exceeding capacity, thereby being detrimental to the public health, safety, and welfare of the residents of Dripping Springs; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council finds that the enactment of this Ordinance is directly related to the immediate preservation of the public peace, health or safety.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DRIPPING SPRINGS, TEXAS THAT:**

**SECTION 1. FINDINGS OF FACT:** The foregoing recitals are incorporated into this Ordinance by reference as legislative findings of fact as if expressly set forth herein.

**SECTION 2. DEFINITIONS:** As used in this Ordinance, these terms shall be defined as follows. Terms appearing in this Ordinance but not defined herein shall have the meanings provided in the City's Code of Ordinances, or if not defined by the City then the common meanings in accordance with ordinary usage.

**A. Commercial property:** means property zoned for or otherwise authorized for use other than single-family use, multifamily use, heavy industrial use, or use as a quarry.

**B. Essential public facilities:** means water, sewer/wastewater, or storm drainage facilities or street improvements provided by a municipality or private utility.

**C. Permit:** means a license, certificate, approval, registration, consent, permit, contract or other agreement for construction related to, or provision of, service from a water or wastewater utility owned, operated, or controlled by a regulatory agency, or other form of authorization required by law, rule, regulation, order, or ordinance that a person must obtain to perform an action or initiate, continue, or complete a project for which the permit is sought.

**D. Project:** means an endeavor over which a regulatory agency exerts its jurisdiction and for which one (1) or more permits are required to initiate, continue, or complete the endeavor.

**E. Property development:** means the construction, reconstruction, or other alteration or improvement of residential or commercial buildings or the subdivision or replatting of a subdivision of residential or commercial property.

**F. Residential property:** means property zoned for or otherwise authorized for single-family or multi-family use.

**SECTION 3. APPLICABILITY:** The City of Dripping Springs hereby enacts this Ordinance in order to implement a temporary moratorium on the acceptance and processing of certain applications and issuance of particular permits and other forms of municipal authorizations related to specific construction and land development activities. This temporary moratorium applies to all city zoning district uses within the City Limits and the ETJ.

Unless a project falls within an Exception (as provided below), this temporary moratorium applies to all applications for property development permits. Permits that are affected or not affected by the Moratorium are attached as **Attachment “A”**. The applicability of the moratorium to any permit not listed shall be determined based on the purpose of the moratorium and may be added to the list by the City Administrator.

**SECTION 4. PURPOSE:** This temporary moratorium is being enacted to maintain the *status quo*, and to:

- A. assess the short-term and long-term comprehensive plan;
- B. review the City’s policies on the acceptance of applications for municipal permits for construction or development;
- C. update the City’s permitting and planning requirements and processes for wastewater and transportation infrastructure; and
- D. obtain and review public input and expert guidance.

**SECTION 5. ENACTMENT:** The City of Dripping Springs hereby enacts this Ordinance implementing a temporary moratorium on the City’s acceptance, review, approval,

and issuance of permits in the City Limits and ETJ.

**SECTION 6. DURATION:** The initial duration of this temporary moratorium shall be for a period of ninety (90) days after enactment of this Ordinance, or repeal of this Ordinance by the City, whichever is sooner.

**SECTION 7. EXTENSION:** If the City determines that the initial period is insufficient for the City to fully complete its study and planning, this Ordinance may be renewed or extended for an additional period of time, necessary to complete the study and implement the recommended changes to City codes, policies, and processes in accordance with the time limits as provided by law upon a majority vote of the City Council.

**SECTION 8. EXCEPTIONS AND EXEMPTIONS:**

**A. Exceptions.** Any property owner who believes that they fall within the below exceptions shall provide notice of the exception at time of application for any permit with the city-approved form. Exceptions are administratively approved or denied. Any exception that is denied may be appealed to the City Council. Exceptions will be determined within the same time period as the administrative completeness check for each project, or within ten business days, whichever is sooner. If a Grandfathered Development Status Determination Request is required, then the exception can be applied concurrently with the Request but the time frame of the Request shall be controlling.

- 1. No Impact Projects.** The temporary moratorium implemented by this Ordinance does not apply to a project that does not:
  - Impact wastewater capacity
  - Require land use modifications inconsistent with the updated comprehensive planning

To make a determination of whether a project is no impact as listed, an applicant shall apply for an exception to the moratorium.

- 2. Ongoing Projects.** The temporary moratorium implemented by this Ordinance does not apply to any projects that are currently, actively in progress for which valid City permits have been issued and have not expired as of November 18, 2021, such being the fifth business day after the date on which the City published notice of the public hearings to consider this Ordinance. The provisions of this Ordinance do not apply to any completed application or plan for development for a permit, plat, verification, rezoning, site plan, approved wastewater plan, or new or revised certificate of occupancy for Property Development that were filed prior to November 18, 2021. New permits applied for as part of a previously approved project may proceed once an exception is applied for and approved as described herein.



- 3. Grandfathered Projects.** The temporary moratorium implemented by this Ordinance shall not apply to projects that are grandfathered under as provided by state law. Property owners asserting grandfathered rights under Texas Local Government Code Chapter 245 must submit an application claiming an exception to this temporary moratorium to the planning department for review in accordance with City policy. Grandfathered status can be approved through an approved Grandfathered Development Status Determination Request. If a Grandfathered Development Status Determination Request has been finalized by staff on or after November 18, 2019, then a new request is not required to meet this exception. New permits applied for as part of a previously vested project may proceed once an exception is applied for and approved as described herein.
  - 4. Development Agreement:** Property owners with a negotiated approval granted by the City Council providing for construction standards, platting, wastewater, and development rules pursuant to Local Government Code Chapter 212, Subchapter G may apply for an exception in accordance with City policy. New permits applied for as part of a Development Agreement project may proceed once an exception is applied for and approved as described herein.
- B. Waivers.** Any property owner who does not assert rights under Texas Local Government Code Chapter 245, but who seeks authorization to proceed with the development permitting process during the time of the temporary moratorium can request a waiver. Property owners agreeing to construct certain wastewater infrastructure at property owners' sole expense and who do not require land use modifications inconsistent with the updated comprehensive planning, in accordance with Local Government Code Chapter 212, Subchapter E may apply for waiver in accordance with City policy.

## SECTION 9. DETERMINATIONS & APPEALS

- A. Exceptions.** The Planning Director or their designee shall make all initial determinations regarding the status of all projects seeking to apply for permits during this temporary moratorium and recognition of all Exceptions (as provided herein). Exceptions for projects filed within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this ordinance may be filed without a corresponding permit application. Any exception application filed within this period will be decided within ten (10) business days of receipt. Any exception that is denied may be appealed to City Council or the applicant may apply for a Waiver. An exception may be applied for by lot, project, plat, or all area covered by a particular permit or agreement.
- B. City Council.** City Council shall make a final decision on waivers within 10 days of filing of application.
- C. Waivers.** The decision to approve an Exemption (as provided for above) shall rest

solely with the City Council. Any denial will stand until the moratorium is lifted unless the project requesting the waiver has a substantial change and reapplies for a waiver.

**SECTION 10. REPEALER:** In the case of any conflict between the other provisions of this Ordinance and any existing Ordinance of the City, the provisions of this Ordinance will control.

**SECTION 11. SEVERABILITY:** If any provision of this Ordinance or the application thereof to any person or circumstances is held invalid, that invalidity or the unenforceability will not affect any other provisions or applications of this Ordinance that can be given effect without the invalid provision.

**SECTION 12. ENFORCEMENT:** The City shall have the power to administer and enforce the provisions of this Ordinance as may be required by governing law. Any person violating any provision of this temporary moratorium is subject to suit for injunctive relief as well as prosecution for criminal violations, and such violation is hereby declared to be a nuisance.

Nothing in this Ordinance shall be construed as a waiver of the City’s right to bring a civil action to enforce the provisions of this Ordinance and to seek remedies as allowed by law and/or equity.

**SECTION 13. EFFECTIVE DATE:** This Ordinance shall be effective immediately upon passage.

**SECTION 14. PROPER NOTICE & MEETING:** It is hereby officially found and determined that the meeting at which this Ordinance was passed was open to the public, and that public notice of the time, place and purpose of said meeting was given as required by the Open Meetings Act, Texas Government Code, Chapter 551. Notice and public hearings were also provided as required by Texas Government Code Chapter 212, Subchapter E.

**READ & ACKNOWLEDGED** on First Reading on the 16th day of November 2021.

**READ & APPROVED** on the Second Reading on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of November 2021.

**CITY OF DRIPPING SPRINGS:**

by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bill Foulds, Jr., Mayor

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Andrea Cunningham, City Secretary



ATTACHMENT "A"



**Permits Subject to Moratorium<sup>1</sup>**

- Commercial/Multi-Family Building Permit Application
- Residential Building Permit Application
- Plan Review Application
- Subdivision Application
- Site Development Application
- Zoning Amendment/PDD Application
- Development Agreement
- Development Agreement Minor Modification/Amendment
- Conditional Use Permit
- Variance Application
- Wastewater Application
- Special District Agreement/Amendment
- Accessory Dwelling Unit Permit
- Swimming Pool Permit
- Mobile/Modular Home Permit

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<sup>1</sup> Any permit subject to the Moratorium must be accompanied by an Exception or Waiver Form which can be found at [www.cityofdrippingsprings.com/moratorium](http://www.cityofdrippingsprings.com/moratorium).

## **Permits not Subject to Moratorium**

- Contractor Registration Form
- Grandfathered Status Request/Appeal
- City Limits/ETJ Determination Letter
- Street Cut/Driveway Permit
- Operational Permit/Inspection Application
- On Site Sewage Facility Permit Application
- Child Care Facility Health Inspection Application
- Food Establishment Permit/Compliance Inspection
- Mobile Food Unit
- Pre-Development Meeting Form
- Certificate of Appropriateness
- Annexation Application
- Sign Permit
- Master Sign Plan
- License to Encroach
- Exterior Lighting Compliance Review
- Zoning Determination Letter Request
- Residential Addition Permit
- Residential Accessory Structure Permit
- Residential Demolition Permit
- Residential Swimming Pool Permit
- Commercial Demolition Permit
- Commercial Tenant Finish Out

- Asbestos Compliance Statement
- Pyrotechnics/Fireworks Application
- Certificates of Occupancy Application (Business Move In/Change of Ownership)
- Any Fire Permits

**ATTACHMENT "B"**

Moratorium Letter – Wastewater