



Regular Council Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 18, 2023 at 6:30 PM
8301 Westview Drive, Houston, Texas 77055

1. CALL TO ORDER Mayor Buesinger called to order the Regular Council Meeting at 6:30 P.M.

1.A. Council Member Crawford gave the **invocation**.

1.B. **Pledge of Allegiance**

1.C. **PRESENT**

Mayor Bob Buesinger
Council Member Mike Gordy
Council Member Justin Crawford
Council Member Andy Carey
Mayor Pro Tem Paul Maddock
Council Member David Schwarz

Also Present Were: City Attorney Bounds, Olson & Olson, City Engineers Him and Vasquez, HDR Engineering, Spring Valley Police Chief Schulze and Captain Lane, City Secretary Stephens, and City Clerk Ray.

2. CITIZEN'S COMMENTS

Nancy Polis, Glourie Drive, said that in the latest fire commissioner's report there were two issues that implied that the former fire chief was negligent or worse.

She stated that she spoke with previous commissioner(s) who informed her that the commission had planned to use the power lift from the retired ambulance when the first new ambulance arrived, and when the second new ambulance arrived, they would order a new power lift for it.

Mrs. Polis also said that there was a delay in purchasing the Bunker Gear because Hedwig Village postponed the decision to their next meeting. She stated that the delay resulted in the receipt of the gear in January of 2023, after the 2022 budget year had expired. She said the commission then needed to make a decision on whether they would transfer the allocated funds from the 2022 Budget to the 2023 Budget, but they were unable to reach a consensus and no action was taken.

3. REPORTS TO COUNCIL

3.A. **Police Report**

Captain Lane said that last month there were 825 calls for service, 669 business checks, 86 public relations, and 15 traffic stops resulting in 13 citations. He stated that there was one (1) package theft and one (1) credit card abuse. Captain Lane recommended that residents communicate with their delivery service to request

hiding packages and advised to call dispatch if they think a package has been stolen. He said patrol officers will attempt to hide delivered packages that are in plain sight and maintain a log for reference. He also asked that residents lock their car doors, as there have been incidents of car theft and stolen weapons in the surrounding areas. Captain Lane said that the Flock license plate reader cameras are assisting in investigations in and around Hilshire Village.

Mayor Pro Tem Maddock said that the stop sign at the Ridgeley and Glourie intersection is often ignored. He also asked about the loud vehicles he and his neighbors hear at night. Captain Lane said that they had a patrol vehicle parked with the running lights on at the I-10 feeder and Wirt Road as a deterrent, and that some of the noise is from I-610.

3.B. **Building Official Report**

Secretary Stephens said that there are no outstanding items to report. The council pointed out that the report was missing from the packet, Secretary Stephens apologized and emailed it to the council.

3.C. **Engineer Report**

Engineer Vasquez said that the **Pine Chase Grove Water Vault area** was revisited with residents Mr. Ireton and Mr. Griffiths onsite to discuss the reoccurring issues. He said that he suggests a proposal for a survey to be presented at next month's meeting. Topographical information is needed to determine the level of grading and drainage improvements along with erosion control measures that can be taken in that area.

Council Member Carey asked if the standing equipment had been moved, and Engineer Vasquez confirmed that the meter control panels had been moved. Mr. Griffiths confirmed that some progress had been made with the relocation of the meter panels, but also said that erosion is exposing the vaults more than before.

Engineer Him stated that all background and utilities information had been prepared for the **Wirt Road Safety Project**. He said that he is holding a community meeting with citizens on May 4th at 6:00 P.M. to discuss the preliminary design plan for the Wirt Road Sidewalk for the directly impacted stakeholders. Engineer Him said that he received an email from the City of Houston Engineer requesting additional information including an exhibit of the location of the proposed sidewalk improvements along with the monetary contribution for the project from Harris County. Attorney Bounds stated that he has been in contact with the assistant attorney at Houston who has no problem with the Interlocal Agreement.

3.D. **Fire Commissioner's Report**

Mayor Buesinger said that there is still a Captain out on leave for a knee injury. He said the department is expecting two (2) new **ambulances**, and one (1) will be ready in the next few weeks. Mayor Buesinger said that the department continues to conduct hydrant testing in all the Villages.

Mayor Buesinger stated that the annual **audit** is still in progress with Belt Harris Pechacek. He also said that the department is researching bookkeeping and accounting firms for their day-to-day accounting.

Mayor Buesinger said that Chief Miller is looking into utilizing the police **dispatchers** in the Memorial Villages as backup for the dispatcher at the fire department. He expressed that these conversations are necessary and that efficiency is needed to reduce the burden on the taxpayer but the solution cannot only be hiring more people.

Mayor Buesinger said that the department is looking for a consultant for a **Salary and Compensation Survey**, which hasn't been done in three (3) years. He also stated that they are preparing for the **ISO Audit** pre-survey.

Mayor Buesinger stated that the department is coordinating monthly **CPR classes** for the community and will be advertising to the cities soon.

Mayor Buesinger said that at last month's meeting he discussed a shortage in the budget for the **Bunker Gear** received at the beginning of 2023. He said that the commission was surprised because the cities had previously approved an amendment specifically for the gear, and the department was now asking for an additional \$150,000 to pay for the equipment.

Mayor Buesinger said that per the Interlocal Agreement, any budget transfer of more than \$10,000 needs commission and participating cities' approval. He stated that the procedure was not followed.

Mayor Buesinger said that last month the City approved a budget transfer for radios and lifesaving equipment that was not purchased in last year's budget as anticipated. He stated that there will be more requests for **additional funding**, including approximately \$300,000 for personnel expenses. Also, he said that the increase in salaries and benefits was not budgeted as well as worker's comp insurance. Mayor Buesinger said that an additional \$600,000 is needed, not including \$150,000 for bunker gear.

Mayor Buesinger said that an overlay coat on the **annex roof** is not an acceptable solution according to the consultant. He stated that a new metal seam roof layered on top of the existing roof with an air gap will cost \$200,000. The commission approved the amount and will present to their respective councils next month. Mayor Buesinger said that the **main building roof** will be replaced and is still under construction warranty.

Council Member Schwarz said that **David Foster** has been hired at a fire department in California. He stated that the council was not able to speak freely regarding the subject due to legal and open records reasons. He said the Council's task is to make decisions that are best for the citizens and protect the taxpayer dollars. Council Member Schwarz said that many questions have been asked and now is the time to address those concerns. He said that the Council asked budgetary questions and requested specific documents which were refused by then fire chief David Foster. Council Member Schwarz said that he believes it is time for a formal statement from the City regarding the mismanagement of the department's finances and the likelihood of a forensic auditor to get involved.

Council Member Gordy said that he agreed, and that leaders have to make decisions based on the information available. He said that Robert Byrne was the

City's fire commissioner for six (6) years and failed to raise these financial issues during the development of the City's budget. Council Member Gordy expressed that he felt blindsided by the lack of information provided, whether intentional or not. He stated that Hilshire Village's revenue comes from homeowners, unlike other Villages who are able to collect more sales tax. Council Member Gordy said in the last decade the City budget has been built to a healthy level. He said that the City maintains a tight budget and forward planning is critical.

Mayor Buesinger said that there was robust discussion at the last fire commission meeting regarding a special audit for over expenditures of \$10,000 or more without the commission or cities' approval. Mayor Buesinger said that this needs to be investigated.

4. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

4.A. Discussion and Possible Approval of Image Wrap for Lift Station Generator and Its Effect on the Warranty

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Maddock, Seconded by Council Member Schwarz.

Secretary Stephens said that the previous approval for an image wrap included the contingency that it doesn't affect the warranty. She stated that she was not able to get that assurance from the wrap installer and was bringing it back to the council for discussion on how the wrap could affect the generator's warranty, and whether they want to proceed.

Council Member Gordy said that he felt as long as the airflow is not impacted, and the wrap is installed carefully, then there shouldn't be a problem. Council Member Schwarz said that he has a wrap on his generator and has not had any issues. Council Member Gordy asked for a post-installation inspection by Generators of Houston to check the wrap and recommended moving forward with the installation.

Voting Yea: Council Member Gordy, Council Member Crawford, Council Member Carey, Mayor Pro Tem Maddock, Council Member Schwarz

The motion carried 5-0.

4.B. Discussion and Possible Approval to Survey the Pine Chase Grove Cul-de-sac to Determine Easement Area and Erosion

Motion made by Council Member Crawford, Seconded by Council Member Carey.

Engineer Vasquez said that a topographic survey is to better understand the existing conditions of the easement, and a boundary survey will show the limit of the City of Houston equipment. He said that requests have been made to the City of Houston regarding other improvements, but no response has been received, so he is proposing to move forward with items under the City's control.

Council Member Gordy asked if there is a plat for the property. Engineer Him said that he has plat information that shows a right-of-way connected to Westview Drive,

and added that the City of Houston has not been able to find record of an easement either. He stated that there is a possibility that an easement was never dedicated. Engineer Him said that he believes the oldest piece of equipment was installed in the 1980s. Secretary Stephens said she spoke with someone who lived in Hilshire Village back then and was told it was always a cul-de-sac. Engineer Him said that the equipment is in a dedicated right-of-way and may not have required an easement. He estimated the cost for the topographic and boundary survey to be approximately \$3,500.

Voting Yea: Council Member Gordy, Council Member Crawford, Council Member Carey, Mayor Pro Tem Maddock, Council Member Schwarz

The motion carried 5-0.

4.C. Discussion and Possible Approval of Resolution #2023-245 Denying the CenterPoint Energy Request to Increase Distribution Rates

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Maddock, Seconded by Council Member Schwarz.

Secretary Stephens said that she received recommendation for this resolution from Lloyd Gosselink and the Gulf Coast Coalition of Cities. She said that as a group, cities are working together to limit the increase in rates charged to the City by CenterPoint.

Attorney Bounds stated that the City of Houston is also fighting this and there is a potential for another resolution the future.

Voting Yea: Council Member Gordy, Council Member Crawford, Council Member Carey, Mayor Pro Tem Maddock, Council Member Schwarz

The motion carried 5-0.

4.D. Discussion and Possible Approval to Negotiate Pricing with a Utility Service Operator

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Maddock, Seconded by Council Member Schwarz.

Mayor Buesinger said that at the beginning of the year the City was informed by Inframark that our utility operational costs were going to increase by a substantial amount. He said that the City has not had a comparative bid for utility operators in a long time, and therefore sought pricing from two (2) recommended companies. Mayor Buesinger said that both companies are capable of providing services to Hilshire Village. He said that Precision Utilities is a smaller company whereas Municipal Operations has their own heavy equipment and the man power to respond in an emergency. He said that he would like to proceed with obtaining pricing from Municipal Operations and Consulting for further discussion. Attorney Bounds said that in his opinion this would be a professional service and would not be subject to bidding requirements.

Council Member Gordy stated that Inframark is a big company and the service has

been good but the increase in pricing is causing the City to look at other providers. He said either of the two (2) interviewed companies are qualified, but if multiple customers are impacted during an emergency, it's better to have more resources. Council Member Gordy said that the City has a simple system, without treatment plants or water wells.

Voting Yea to request utility service pricing from Municipal Operations & Consulting: Council Member Gordy, Council Member Crawford, Council Member Carey, Mayor Pro Tem Maddock, Council Member Schwarz

The motion carried 5-0.

5. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

5.A. Discuss Requirements for Tree City USA Designation

City Clerk Ray said that the Arbor Day Foundation established the program in the 1970s. Metro and non-metro municipalities including Houston, West University, and Hedwig Village are certified tree cities. She said this program gives the City a framework to be proactive about community trees and remove hazards before they become an issue.

Clerk Ray said that there are four (4) minimum standards. She said the City has already established an Arbor Day and spends at least \$2 per capita on public tree maintenance. She said that the City would need to create and maintain a Tree Board and enact a community tree care ordinance. Secretary Stephens said that the community tree ordinance would not affect the existing ordinance for trees on personal property.

Clerk Ray said that the intention is to make the City's rights-of-way and public areas better kept and to provide citizens with forestry knowledge and free trees.

Council Member Schwarz left the meeting.

6. REPORTS TO COUNCIL

6.A. Mayor Buesinger's Report

Mayor Buesinger reminded the audience of the Hilshire Village Civic Club Spring Event in the Pine Chase cul-de-sac.

He also said that early voting starts next week with election day on Saturday May 6th and encouraged everyone to come out and vote.

6.B. City Secretary's Report:

Secretary Stephens said that the complaint log was longer than usual, but there were multiple calls regarding sewer problems in Hickory Shadows which was resolved.

Secretary Stephens said she would follow up with the City of Houston to confirm that the lid at the water vault at Hickory Shadows would be replaced, meanwhile, Inframark technicians were checking on the plywood covering the hole they installed.

Secretary Stephens said that a resident requested a traffic control light on Wirt Road at the entrance to Hickory Shadows. She explained that it would be difficult to get a light installed at that intersection, but that it may be feasible to request a “do not block intersection” sign for the median. Secretary Stephens asked Captain Lane to keep an on eye on traffic in that area.

6.C. **City Treasurer's Report**

Secretary Stephens said that she heard from other Memorial Villages that they were not confident in the security of TexPool and had moved their money to private banks with higher interest. She asked the Council if they are concerned and if the City should be taking similar measures.

Council Member Crawford said that TexPool is not FDIC insured but is AAA rated by S&P Global. He said that FDIC insurance is capped at \$250,000 per entity. Funds held in TexPool are short term government securities and the Council agreed to do more research on who is reinsuring those investments. Council Member Carey said as long as TexPool isn't lending there shouldn't be an issue.

Susan Blevins, City Consultant, said that she prepared the budget to-date with current financials. She said that the anticipation note is due in March but the City had not collected enough property taxes at that point and had to borrow from the general fund. She said the utility fund balance is \$623,346 of which \$166,000 belongs to the American Rescue Plan project.

Mrs. Blevins said that GFL did not bill for February or March garbage until April, offsetting that line item. She also stated that building permit revenue currently exceeds expenses. She reviewed the year-to-date budget numbers including adjusting journal entries resulting from the 2022 Audit.

Council Member Carey asked what steps are needed to make sure the next capital improvement projects are financed. He stated that a comprehensive plan needs to be submitted before the fiscal year-end. Mrs. Blevins said that a contract is required to obtain another commercial loan.

Consultant Blevins suggested that the \$5,000 budgeted for Hazard Mitigation Projects be used for the Pine Chase Grove drainage issues.

Council Member Gordy asked about the aging of the desktop computers, and server equipment. Consultant Blevins said that there are no remaining funds from the grant the city received, but she would look into the warranties and report back.

Council Member Gordy said that having Consultant Blevins check financial records monthly would help with the transition for Secretary Stephens.

7. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Maddock, Seconded by Council Member Carey.

7.A. Disbursements

7.B. Minutes from the 3/21/2023 Regular Council Meeting

7.C. Check Registers

Voting Yea: Council Member Gordy, Council Member Crawford, Council Member Carey, Mayor Pro Tem Maddock

The motion carried 4-0.

8. ADDITIONAL COUNCIL COMMENTS

9. FUTURE AGENDA TOPICS

10. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Secretary Stephens said that the City celebrated its 68th anniversary of incorporation this month.

Kristi Cooper, Ridgeley Drive, asked if the City executes contracts for consultants including a scope of service, hourly rate, and a confidentiality agreement, and would such a contract apply to Mrs. Blevins. City Attorney Bounds confirmed that contracts are created depending on the service provided.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Maddock, Seconded by Council Member Crawford.

Voting Yea: Council Member Gordy, Council Member Crawford, Council Member Carey, Mayor Pro Tem Maddock

The motion carried 4-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 P.M.

ATTEST:

Robert F. Buesinger, Mayor

Cassie Stephens, City Secretary