

Minutes of Special Meeting

The City Council City of Richwood

A Special Meeting of the City Council of City of Richwood was held Monday, August 31, 2015, beginning at 6:00 PM in the Richwood City Hall, 1800 N. Brazosport Blvd. Richwood, Texas.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Clint Kocurek, Mayor and presiding officer.

II. INVOCATION

The invocation was given by Glenn Patton, City Manager.

III. PLEDGES OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance and the Texas Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those in attendance.

IV. ROLL CALL OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

Roll call showed the following members present:

Clint Kocurek, Mayor and presiding officer
Melissa Blanks, Council, Position #2
Sarah Harris, Council, Position #4
Chris Hardison, Council, Position #5

Absent:

Paul Raymond, Council, Position #1
Jarrod Beaty, Council, Position #3 and Mayor Pro Tem

A quorum was declared. Others present included Glenn Patton, City Manager, Karen B. Schrom, City Secretary, Bryan Corb, Police Chief, Kenny Williams, Public Works Director, John Pitts, Lauren LaCount, James Perry, Kyle Stephens, Brian Pilcik, Chris Jones, Candace Kukla, Jack Daniel, William Robertson, and Matt Bayes.

V. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

A. Public Hearing - FY 16 Tax Rate

Lauren LaCount asked City Council to consider lowering the tax rate for Richwood. She provided information on select properties within the city limits. She feels that understanding the impact of rising property values on the citizens and business owners in Richwood should be a key element in setting our local tax rates. She also included demographics on the sales tax rate and the property tax rate of our neighboring cities.

She also suggested making several cuts in the budget, including the contingency funds, building and grounds in Administration, the Events budget and attorney's fees in Code Enforcement.

Mayor Kocurek explained the effective rate is the rate needed to bring in the same tax dollars as the prior year. The rollback rate is the highest rate Council can adopt without triggering a rollback election. Our tax rate has been the same for the last 4 years.

Councilman Hardison appreciated the effort Ms. LaCount put into her presentation. He explained the City is trying to build up its Fund Balance. This year, that money was spent on a sewer line. All our money is going for repair and upkeep of our infrastructure and current services.

Candace Kukla stated that our tax rate is double Lake Jackson's. Mayor Kocurek explained they have a larger sales tax base than we do.

Mr. Patton stated we are doing things to attract more businesses such as the Chapter 380 Agreements.

James Perry commented a lower tax rate would bring in more businesses.

There was a time in our history where Council was against growth. They wished to stay as a bedroom community. This has placed us at a disadvantage. Residents expect the same services they could receive in other cities such as parks.

Councilman Blanks stated that we want to bring in more businesses, attract new residents but we can't because our tax rate is too high. She knows of folks who are moving to Lake Jackson because of our tax rate. She questioned why we can't lower ours and other cities are lowering theirs. She would like to see the tax rate cut by at least one cent.

The Mayor then called for another budget workshop on Tuesday, September 8th.

B. Replat request - Brazos Creekwood Apartments

They are requesting the two lots on Creekwood Landing Drive be combined as one lot. On motion by Councilman Hardison, seconded by Councilman Harris, with all members present voting aye, the replat request was approved as presented.

C. Proposed Dispatch Services

Chief Corb asked this item be tabled since there are two council members who are absent.

The Mayor requested this item be on the agenda. He stated the plan was presented to CCPD to move forward with dispatching but had not been presented to City Council.

Mayor Kocurek asked about the dispatch fee we are paying Lake Jackson – would we pay a reduced rate since we’re doing part of the dispatching. What are the plans for someone calling in sick? Lake Jackson hired an additional dispatcher after adding us – would this result in them having to cut back? He didn’t see us becoming self-sufficient if we still rely on someone to back us up.

Chief Corb explained the plan is to have one dispatch/clerk, handle dispatching Monday through Friday from 8 am to 5 pm. He has visited with Chief Parks from Lake Jackson at length about this proposal. They will continue to handle 911 calls as well as dispatching after hours. This is just a baby step in the long term plan of having our own full time dispatcher. The plan is to gradually grow the program. We’d like to have it fully implemented in the next 2 to 3 years. While this would not result in a cut to the dispatching fees, it will help deter the increase we know is coming in FY 17.

Mayor Kocurek asked about the use of the jail. We had discussed having a jail for the past several years but haven’t moved forward due to the liability costs. We discussed using the cells for booking reasons as a holding cell. If we’re going to look at taking on the liability of a jail, we need to revisit this and have more discussion.

Chief Corb explained the dispatcher could monitor the cell in the event there is a prisoner. Currently, the cells are used to detain someone while being processed. The officer can’t go back on patrol until the prisoner is either seen by the judge or has been transported to Oyster Creek.

Mayor Kocurek stated that until we were fully operational, we would still be paying someone else for these services. He feels this program is something we can’t afford and Lake Jackson would provide better services than we can for half the cost. He questioned why the Fire Department was included in the

discussion. Chief Corb explained the cost of dispatching is in the Police Department Budget. Mayor Kocurek stated it was there for coding purposes just as EMS services are in the Fire Department budget.

He also recognized that there were fire department personnel at the meeting tonight because they want to know what is going on as they only know bits and pieces.

Mr. Patton suggested this item be tabled and the groups meet together to develop a program.

Councilman Blanks stated she would like to see this in our long term plan.

VI. REPORTS

There were none.

VII. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

There was no report

VIII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Budget Workshop – September 8th
Ordinance #403

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were none.

X. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

APPROVED BY A MAJORITY VOTE OF COUNCIL ON SEPTEMBER 14, 2015.

Clint Kocurek, Mayor

ATTEST:

Karen B. Schrom, City Secretary