

The City Council of the City of Columbus, Texas met in regular session on Monday, September 28, 2020, at 5:30 p.m., in the Council Chambers of City Hall located at 605 Spring St., Columbus, Texas, with the following present:

Mayor	-	Lori An Gobert
Mayor Pro Tem	-	Chuck Rankin
Councilman	-	Keith Cummings
Councilman	-	Michael Ridlen
Councilman	-	Gary Swindle
Councilwoman	-	Sandra Frnka
City Manager	-	Donald Warschak
City Secretary	-	Bana Schneider

Other City Staff present included:

Police Chief	-	Skip Edman
Code Enforcement	-	Richard LaCourse
Fire Marshal	-	Brent Gorman

1. Call to Order.

Mayor Lori An Gobert called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation.

Gobert led the Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation.

3. Consent Agenda:

- a. Approval of Invoices
- b. Approval of the June 2020 Financial Statements
- c. Approval of the July 2020 Financial Statements

Councilman Swindle made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Councilwoman Frnka seconded the motion.

The vote was as follows:

Ayes: Councilmen Cummings, Ridlen, Swindle, and Rankin; Councilwoman Frnka

The motion passed.

4. Citizens' Presentations and Comments.¹

Citizens spoke during specific agenda items.

5. City Manager's Report Including the Water Filtration Project, Water Well Rehab Project, and the 2020 Sewer Line Improvement Project Updates.

City Manager, Donald Warschak, gave his report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. Regarding the Water Filtration Project, Warschak stated WesTech had been onsite at the Spring and Tait filter locations. They are trying to determine what corrective measures should be taken. Councilman Rankin asked if WesTech had given him a timeline. Gobert stated she was there during the inspection. She told them the City feels the third unit will most likely fail as well. The inspectors agreed with that assumption. Gobert said that would leave us with about three months before we will be without any filter system. She indicated WesTech understands the urgency, and they would work as quickly as possible to come up with a solution. She stated the company implied they would be working as quickly as possible to come up with a solution; possibly within 2-3 weeks. Councilman

Swindle stated this project has been a disaster. We have spent all of this money, and we still have crappy water. Rankin stated the meetings need to be documented and send them a note that we need an answer. Gobert stated Warschak had been in contact with the City Attorney. There was a discussion regarding the current use of phosphates, and the failure of the vessels. Gobert stated they will call WesTech tomorrow. Swindle asked if she thought this would become a legal battle. Gobert indicated she did not. She believes they are taking responsibility for all of the issues. Councilwoman Frnka asked about the quality of our water. Gobert stated it is deteriorating. Frnka then asked about the safety of the water. Gobert stated it is safe. Councilman Ridlen stated we would not meet again concerning this issue until the second week of October. Gobert stated the engineers will be working on it, and hopefully will have a solution for us before our next meeting. Swindle asked to be notified if any news came in before the next meeting. Warschak stated he would send out any update he receives. Ridlen stated WesTech has had no problem dragging this situation out, and they are not drinking this water. He also said he does not believe they have any impetus to resolve this issue other than a legal battle. Rankin stated he feels the Mayor has made it quite clear what we are wanting, so we need to give them an opportunity to address the situation. Councilman Cummings asked if everyone remembers when Bruce Tesch from B&D Services came to Council and showed pictures of the fittings on the vessels that did not align properly. He stated he asked at the time why we did not take legal action. Warschak stated those issues have no-bearing on the current problems. Cummings asked why we didn't sue them at that time. Rankin stated taking legal action at the time would have created a delay. Gobert stated she emphasized to WesTech how important this project is to the City because it is our entire water supply. She wants to give them the opportunity to fix the problem because they are owning the mistakes that were made. There was a discussion regarding how much time should be given to WesTech to come up with a solution. Ridlen asked how much it would cost to have the City Attorney come to give us a pre-litigation opinion of where we are at. City Secretary, Bana Schneider, explained the costs involved to bring Mr. Bovey to the meeting. Ridlen stated this is a 1.4 million dollar project that has been strung out for over two years. He thinks we should give WesTech a week to come up with a plan, and if they don't, we should exert some legal pressure.

Regarding the Water Well Rehab Project, Warschak stated the contractor will begin the rehab work at the Tait water well later this week.

He also commented the Sewer Line Improvement project is almost completed. The contractor has tied in the new line at the McCormick Waste Water Treatment Plant. There are some clean-up items they will be taking care of in order to close-out the project.

Warschak also mentioned there will be a meeting with the contractor for the GLO storm drainage project later this week.

6. Consideration and Action to Ratify the Budgeted Property Tax Increase Reflected in the 2020-2021 Budget.

Councilman Swindle made a motion to ratify the budgeted property tax increase. Councilwoman Frnka seconded the motion.

The vote was as follows:

Ayes: Councilmen Cummings, Ridlen, Swindle, and Rankin; Councilwoman Frnka

The motion passed.

7. Consideration and Action to Approve Ordinance 236-20 to Establish the Property Tax Rate of \$0.28392.

Rankin stated the actual rate per hundred is going down. Ridlen stated the wording of the motion does not seem right to him, and it is wrong to be compelled to state this as written.

Councilman Swindle made a motion that the property tax rate be increased by the adoption of a rate of \$0.28392, which is effectively a 3.49 percent increase in the tax rate. Councilman Cummings seconded the motion.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Councilmen Rankin - Aye
Councilwoman Frnka – Aye
Councilman Swindle – Aye
Councilman Ridlen – Nay
Councilman Cummings – Aye

The motion passed.

8. Consideration and Action to Approve the 2021 Budget for the Columbus Community Industrial Development Corporation.

Gobert stated they have moved some numbers to different categories, but there is no change to the final expenditures.

Councilman Ridlen made a motion to approve the CCIDC 2021 budget. Councilman Rankin seconded the motion.

The vote was as follows:

Ayes: Councilmen Cummings, Ridlen, Swindle, and Rankin; Councilwoman Frnka

The motion passed.

9. Consideration and Action to Approve the Mayor's Appointment of One Member to the CCIDC Board of Directors for a Term Ending May 2022.

The Mayor appointed Shalor Townzen to sit on the board. Rankin stated he appreciated the statement Townzen included with his application, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. Ridlen asked Townzen where he came from before Columbus. Townzen stated he had been in Childress, Texas for fifteen years before moving to Columbus, and he said he grew up in Sanderson, Texas. Gobert stated he is with the First National Bank of Eagle Lake, and his banking experience would be an asset to the board.

Councilman Swindle made a motion to approve the appointment of Shalor Townzen to the CCIDC Board. Councilman Ridlen seconded the motion.

The vote was as follows:

Ayes: Councilmen Cummings, Ridlen, Swindle, and Rankin; Councilwoman Frnka

The motion passed.

10. Consideration and Action to Submit to Planning & Zoning a Proposed Replat of a 2.901 Acre Tract Situated in the Elizabeth Tumlinson Survey (A-44) of the City of Columbus into Two (2) Tracts (0.362 Acres (Tract 1) and 2.539 Acres (Remainder Tract)) as Requested by the Columbus Independent School District.

Warschak stated the replat was submitted by the school district. The location is over by the Veteran's Hall. The purpose is to carve out the semi-circular park at that location, and dedicate it to the City as a Veteran's Park. Swindle asked if this meant they would be divesting themselves from the upkeep of the park. Gobert stated we had been approached a while ago by the veterans' group about taking over the property, and we had discussed it at that time. These are the legal steps required to make that happen, and it is the formal request from the school district. The veterans are concerned about what will happen in the future, and they would like to have this memorial park to remain there in perpetuity. This is a way of protecting it. Ridlen asked if the school approached us, because he does not remember talking about this issue before. Gobert stated the veterans had

approached her, and she had asked Council if this was something, they would be amenable to. The consensus was that you would, so the school district was then approached. Rankin stated this all happened a while ago. Gobert concurred. She believes in the near future they will probably ask about having the City put gates at the stadium in order to close the street during football games in exchange for the property. Ridlen asked if the school had some contractual obligations when they purchased the building and park from the veterans. Chris Christensen spoke on behalf of the veteran's group. He stated the agreement with the school district was they would maintain the building, and the veterans would be able to meet there. He stated it was a surprise to the veterans that the contract did not carve out the memorial park from the property that included the building. He also stated if the school district decides the property could be used for a different purpose, like a parking lot, then the park could be in jeopardy. We want that memorial area protected. Frnka asked about the condition of the building. Christensen stated it is pretty run down. Ridlen asked if there was electrical power at the park. Warschak stated the lighting there is serviced from the building, and if the school removes the building, we would need to drop a meter there. Rankin stated he did not see it. Frnka stated she did, and that our veterans are why we are here today. She also said she felt every little town should pay homage to their veterans in some way.

Councilman Swindle made a motion to submit the replat to P&Z. Councilman Ridlen seconded the motion.

The vote was as follows:

Ayes: Councilmen Cummings, Ridlen, Swindle, and Rankin; Councilwoman Frnka

The motion passed.

11. Consideration and Action to Authorize the Mayor to Enter the City of Columbus into a Contract for Public Services with Family Crisis Center.

Gobert asked if there were any changes from last year. Schneider stated there was not, and the amount was included in the new budget. Police Chief Edman stated Family Crisis Center has been phenomenal to work with.

Councilman Rankin made a motion to authorize the Mayor to enter into the contract for public services. Councilwoman Frnka seconded the motion.

The vote was as follows:

Ayes: Councilmen Cummings, Ridlen, Swindle, and Rankin; Councilwoman Frnka

The motion passed.

12. Consideration and Action to Authorize the Mayor to Enter the City of Columbus into a Contract for Public Services with Combined Community Action, Inc.

Councilman Ridlen made a motion to authorize the Mayor to enter into the contract for public services. Councilwoman Frnka seconded the motion.

The vote was as follows:

Ayes: Councilmen Cummings, Ridlen, Swindle, and Rankin; Councilwoman Frnka

The motion passed.

13. Consideration and Action to Authorize the Mayor to Enter the City of Columbus into a Contract for Public Services with CASA for Kids of South Central Texas.

Edman stated this organization is also awesome.

Councilwoman Frnka made a motion to authorize the Mayor to enter into the contract for public services. Councilman Cummings seconded the motion.

The vote was as follows:

Ayes: Councilmen Cummings, Ridlen, Swindle, and Rankin; Councilwoman Frnka

The motion passed.

14. Consideration and Action, if Necessary, Regarding the August 2020 Fire Marshal Report.

Gorman gave his report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. He highlighted the inspections, and the fire department calls for the month. He also spoke about the consultation with Hound Song Brewing company. Gorman also stated the ladder truck went down on the same day one of the engines went down. PS Trax should go live in November. There was a discussion regarding the inspections, and the annual use of the ladder truck. Council also discussed the replacement schedule for the fire department vehicles.

No action was required.

15. Consideration and Action, if Necessary, Regarding the August 2020 Code Enforcement Report.

Code Enforcement Officer, Richard LaCourse, gave the report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. LaCourse highlighted the permits for the month. He stated he had added a severity rating to the substandard buildings with the plan to start working on the properties with the worst rating first.

No action was required.

16. Consideration and Action, if Necessary, Regarding August 2020 Police Report.

Police Chief, Skip Edman, gave the report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. Edman highlighted department training during the month. He also gave Council the heads-up about the school district approaching them about adding a police officer for the school. He added that he had spoken to the county regarding how they handled the school resource officer at Rice. Edman said the school district pays the salary, and the county pays for the vehicle, equipment, and benefits. He wanted Council to be aware that this request may come sometime in the future. There was a discussion regarding mental health transports.

No action was required

17. Items from Councilmembers.²

Councilman Cummings – None

Councilman Ridlen – Stated, again, how he objects to the compelled speech required to approve the tax rate.

Councilman Swindle – None

Councilwoman Frnka – None

Councilman Rankin – None

Mayor Gobert – None

18. Announcements.

There were no announcements.

19. Adjournment.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 6:23 p.m.



Mayor, Lori An Gobert

ATTEST:



Bana Schneider, City Secretary

¹During this agenda item, citizens may comment for the record on items, which are not on the agenda. However, the Council may not participate in discussion or deliberation on any item that is not on the agenda. Citizens may request that a topic be added to a future agenda.

²Limited to statements. Issues raised by councilmembers under this item cannot be deliberated by Council. The Open Meetings Act does not allow Council to deliberate items that don't appear on the agenda.