



The City Council of the City of Columbus, Texas met in regular session on Monday, January 23, 2023, at 5:30 PM, 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 – Ronny Daley
Councilwoman – Paige Sciba
Councilman – Michael Ridlen
City Manager – Donald Warschak
City Secretary – Bana Schneider
Assistant City Secretary – Dinah Jacobs

Other City Staff present included:

Police Chief – Skip Edman
Fire Chief – Dusty Dittmar
Assistant Chief – Sydney Chollett
Lieutenant – Brent Gorman
Fire Marshal – Brent Gorman, Jr.
Code Enforcement – Richard LaCourse
Code/Fire Assistant – Duane Naiser
Library Director – Susan Chandler

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 and invocation.

3. Consent Agenda:




Motion to approve the consent agenda as presented.

Moved by: Ronny Daley

Seconded by: Keith Cummings

Aye Michael Ridlen, Paige Sciba, Chuck Rankin, Keith Cummings, and Ronny Daley

Carried 5-0

- 3.1 **Approval of Invoices** [INVOICES 01.23.2023.pdf](#) 
- 3.2 **Approval of Minutes of the January 9, 2023 Regular Meeting**
[MINUTES 01.09.2023.pdf](#) 
- 3.3 **Approval of the Investment Report for the Quarter Ended December 31, 2022** [INVESTMENT REPORT 12-31-2022.pdf](#) 

4. Citizens' Presentations and Comments¹

Debbie Damon addressed Council regarding a child on a scooter not wearing a helmet, as well as a child on the handlebars and on the back. Her concern is child safety.

Joe Sherwood addressed Council regarding the speed limit on Walnut Street coming into town in front of his business. He would like to have the 35-mph speed limit moved to the other side of the bridge so that traffic is slower coming into town.

Chris Christensen addressed Council regarding things happening at the border.

5. City Manager's Report Including Sales Tax, the MLK Sidewalk Project, TxDOT Projects Update, Montezuma Street Sidewalk Grant Application, Sewer Averaging, Downtown Revitalization Sidewalk Grant, and the Softball and Baseball Park Restroom

Renovations. [CM REPORT.pdf](#) 

City Manager, Donald Warschak, gave his report. A copy is attached to these minutes.

Regarding sales tax, Warschak reported the payment for December was \$157,673.20 compared to \$148,341.89 over the same time last year. The County and City of Eagle Lake saw an increase, while the City of Weimar saw a decrease.

Regarding the MLK Street Sidewalk Project, Warschak reported we are waiting on TxDOT to close out the project.

Regarding the Hwy 90 East River Bridge Project, Warschak reported the traffic has been shifted by TxDOT, and the existing truss bridge has been taken out of service. The contractor is currently working on the south side of Front Street intersection.

Regarding the Hwy 90 (Walnut Street Sidewalk Project), Warschak reported the construction project has been started by TxDOT and they are moving quickly.

Regarding the Hwy 71 (Fannin Street) Signal Light Project, Warschak reported there has been a preconstruction meeting with TxDOT for this project. Their contractor has two signal lights in Dewitt county and then they will move over to this project.

Regarding the Montezuma Street Sidewalk Grant Application, Warschak reported we will be applying for the Transportation Alternatives Grant Program. The first step of the application process is due at the end of January.

Regarding Sewer Averaging, Warschak reported this began on December 15, 2022 and will run through February 15, 2023. Water usage during this time will determine residential sewer rates for the upcoming year.

Regarding the Downtown Revitalization Sidewalk Grant, Warschak reported work will begin this week in the alley behind the Live Oak Art Center.

Regarding the Softball and Baseball Park Restroom Renovations, Warschak reported they have been working with subcontractors to get pricing on the project. An application will be

submitted to CCIDC once the costs come in. Once funding is approved, the work will begin. A preliminary timeline schedule was given to Council members. Statute does not require two separate readings, but it would still come to Council for the nod. If funding is secured before February 13th, they may be able to start a week earlier.

6. **Consideration and Action to Approve an Engagement Letter with Patillo, Brown & Hill for Audit Services for the September 2022 Financial Statements.** [AUDIT ENGAGEMENT LETTER 2022.pdf](#) 

Motion to approve the engagement letter from Patillo, Brown, and Hill for audit services.


Moved by: Michael Ridlen

Seconded by: Chuck Rankin

Aye Michael Ridlen, Paige Sciba, Chuck Rankin, Keith Cummings, and Ronny Daley

Carried 5-0

7. **Consideration and Action to Adopt Ordinance 261-23, an Ordinance of the City of Columbus Authorizing a General (Regular) Municipal Election to be Held on May 6, 2023.** [ORDINANCE 261-23 ORDERING GENERAL ELECTION MAY 2023.pdf](#) 

Consideración y acción para adoptar ordenanza 261-23, una ordenanza de la ciudad de Columbus que autoriza un elección municipal (regular) general para ser sostenido el 6 de mayo de 2023. [ORDENANZA NRO 261-23.pdf](#) 

Motion to approve Ordinance 261-23.

Moved by: Chuck Rankin

Seconded by: Keith Cummings

Aye Michael Ridlen, Paige Sciba, Chuck Rankin, Keith Cummings, and Ronny Daley

Carried 5-0

Moción para aprobar la Ordenanza 261-23

Llevado por: Chuck Rankin

Secundado por: Keith Cummings

Si Michael Ridlen, Paige Sciba, Chuck Rankin, Keith Cummings, and Ronny Daley

Carried 5-0

8. Consideration and Action to Approve an Election Services Agreement with the Colorado County Elections Administrator for the May 6, 2023 General Election.

[ELECTIONS SERVICES AGREEMENT 2023.pdf](#) 

Motion to approve the Election Services Agreement with the Colorado County Elections Administrator for the May 6, 2023 election.

Moved by: Michael Ridlen

Seconded by: Keith Cummings

Aye Michael Ridlen, Paige Sciba, Chuck Rankin, Keith Cummings, and Ronny Daley

Carried 5-0

9. Consideration and Action, if Necessary, Regarding the Nesbitt Memorial Library Annual Report. [NML ANNUAL REPORT.pdf](#) 

Library Director, Susan Chandler, gave her report. Chandler discussed the annual report with members. She stated they are getting back to more pre-COVID levels of patrons. She also stated she was very thankful for a surprise estate donation the library received at the end of last year. She will be working with the Library Board on how to spend the funds. Chandler also discussed other items and changes that will be in the process at the Library. They are adding a donor wall, archival shelving, software, increasing newspaper archives, complete gallery hanging system, small outside storage building, new meeting room tables, updating the restrooms, large screen tv in the lobby for patrons, UV blinds, and white boards in the kid's area.

There will be an open house from 4-6 p.m. on February 16, 2023, with a ribbon cutting at 4:00 p.m.

10. Consideration and Action to Approve a Bid and Purchase Order for a New Fire Rescue Engine for the 2024 Budget Year.

[PIERCE ENFORCER PUMPER PROPOSAL.pdf](#) 

[SPARTAN METRO STAR PUMPER PROPOSAL.pdf](#) 

Fire Chief, Dusty Dittmar, addressed Council regarding the replacement of the fire rescue engine. This is on the engine replacement schedule, and it is now time to replace the unit. This new unit would be replacing two current units in the department, a 1999 Pierce Contender and a 2000 Ford Rescue truck. When both units are sold, the funds will go into the replacement fund to help offset the cost of the new engine. The Siddons-Martin Pierce unit would cost is \$808,277 and the Metro Fire Apparatus Spartan unit would cost is \$696,000. We are requesting approval from Council to purchase the Spartan unit at a cost of \$696,000. Total funding in the account is \$535,000 plus \$10,000 in interest, as well as the \$70,000 transfer for a total of \$615,000 at the time the unit would arrive. Ridlen questioned if any funds needed to be put down to secure the unit, to which Dittmar stated no, only funds due upon delivery.

Motion to approve a bid and purchase order for a new fire rescue engine in the 2024 budget year.

Moved by: Keith Cummings

Seconded by: Michael Ridlen

Aye Michael Ridlen, Paige Sciba, Chuck Rankin, Keith Cummings, and Ronny Daley

Carried 5-0

11. Consideration and Action, if Necessary, Regarding the Fire Department Annual Report for 2022. [CVFD 2022.pdf](#)

Fire Marshal, Brent Gorman, Jr., gave the report. A copy is attached to these minutes. Gorman reported there are 35 members that respond to calls 24/7, 365. Total calls increased and are on trend to continue increasing.

There was an engineer study done on the current fire station with options for a remodel. With lack of funding, there was no option to move forward.

A "supplemental membership" for the fire department was created to allow career firefighters with a wealth of knowledge and experience to join, yet not be held to the meeting and call minimums due to their full-time career schedules.

There were 330 total calls for 2022. Gorman gave a breakdown of the calls. He also showed graphs depicting the County calls vs City calls and the amount of funding from each agency.

Other items highlighted were the total property saved in 2022, man hours spent, as well as major incidents.

Gobert stated this was a very impressive report and impressed there were no injuries throughout the year.

Gorman went on to say the department is looking at alternate funding sources, one being the possible formation of an ESD. This would collect funds equally across the board. Gorman stated he, along with Gobert, Warschak, and Asst. Fire Chief Richard LaCourse, will be attending an ESD conference February 2-4, 2023 in Round Rock to get a road map on how to proceed. Ridlen questioned who could form an ESD, and Gorman replied that anyone could.

No action was needed.

12. Consideration and Action, if Necessary, Regarding the December 2022 Fire Marshal Report. [FIRE MARSHAL DEC 2022.pdf](#)

Fire Marshal, Brent Gorman, Jr., gave his report. A copy is attached to these minutes. Gorman reported on inspections completed, plan reviews, investigations, as well as the CVFD calls for December.

No action was needed.

13. Consideration and Action, if Necessary, Regarding the December 2022 Code Enforcement Report. [CODE ENFORCEMENT DEC 2022.pdf](#)

Code Enforcement officer, Richard LaCourse, gave his report. A copy is attached to these minutes. LaCourse reported a total of 25 permits being issued for the month of December, as well as a demolition that was completed and new construction beginning. SmartGov (permit software) verification is ongoing.

No action was needed.

14. Consideration and Action, if Necessary, Regarding the 2022 Report on Racial Profiling.

[REPORT ON RACIAL PROFILING 2022.pdf](#) 

Police Chief, Skip Edman, gave the report. A copy is attached to these minutes. The racial profiling report is solely on traffic stops, no other calls for service. There were 1,534 total stops for 2022. There were no racial profiling reports in 2022.

No action was needed.

15. Consideration and Action, if Necessary, Regarding the December 2022 Police Report.

[DECEMBER 2022 STATS.pdf](#) 

Police Chief, Skip Edman, gave his report. A copy is attached to these minutes. Edman reported on training, the heaviest training month so far. He reported they are working out the details on the shield grant and there was only one mental health transport this month.

No action was needed.

16. Consideration and Action, if Necessary, Regarding Utility Account Credits for High Usage During the December Freeze.

City Secretary, Bana Schneider, included a list of utility accounts that were 100% higher this billing cycle after the recent freeze. Accounts were listed showing their 3-month prior average consumption, the current consumption, and the difference in consumption, along with the credit it would produce. She presented this to see if Council wanted to do any adjustments for customers, because they did approve a credit following winter storm Uri.

Motion to approve a utility adjustment for customers with an adjustment amount that would be greater than \$30.00.

Moved by: Keith Cummings

Seconded by: Paige Sciba

Aye Michael Ridlen, Paige Sciba, Chuck Rankin, Keith Cummings, and Ronny Daley

Carried 5-0

17. Items from Councilmembers²

Cummings - none

Daley - sidewalks are looking good

Sciba - - I am happy about the sidewalks

Ridlen - status of the food truck ordinance (Schneider was getting back with P & Z and they meet Wednesday; ordinance has not been revised; will request someone to attend the next meeting)

Rankin - commended Cummings on handling himself so well after the Cowboy loss; there is no light on the flagpole at the corner

Gobert - she distributed a spreadsheet to members for review regarding different grant projects

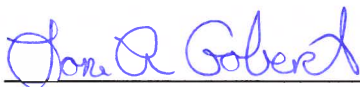
18. Announcements

Warschak - none

Schneider - P & Z meeting on Wednesday at 6:30 p.m.; she is now accepting applications for places on the ballot.

19. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:36 p.m.



Lori An Gobert, Mayor

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.