

The City Council of the City of Columbus, Texas met in regular session on Monday, December 10, 2015 at 6:30 p.m., in the Council Chambers of City Hall located at 605 Spring St., Columbus, Texas, with the following present:

Mayor	-	Dwain Dungen
Mayor Pro Tem	-	Curtiss Schonenberg
Councilman	-	Woody Moore
Councilwoman	-	Lori An Gobert
Councilman	-	Eddie Hernandez
Councilman	-	Chuck Rankin
City Manager	-	Donald Warschak
City Secretary	-	Bana Schneider

Other City Staff present included:

Code Enforcement	-	Ford Stein
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1. **Call to Order.**

Mayor Dwain Dungen called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation.**

Dungen led the Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation.

3. **Consent Agenda:**

- a. Approval of Invoices
- b. Approval of Minutes of November 12, 2015 regular Meeting
- c. Approval of Minutes of November 23, 2015 regular Meeting

Councilman Schonenberg made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Councilman Hernandez seconded the motion.

The vote was as follows:

Ayes: Councilmen Schonenberg, Moore, Rankin and Hernandez; Councilwoman Gobert.

The motion passed.

4. **Citizens' Presentations and Comments.'**

There were no citizen comments.

5. **City Manager's Report Including Sewer Averaging, Gas Line Project, Water Evaluation Study and TXDOT Projects Updates**

City Manager, Donald Warschak, gave his City Manager's report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

Warschak stated the City's October sales tax collections were up about \$7500 over the same time last year. He also stated that Weimar and the County as a whole also saw an increase. Eagle Lake's collections were approximately the same as last year.

Warschak indicated the Gas Line Project is progressing. They are currently working in the area of Chapman and Dewees Streets with 1/3 of the total line installed. They stopped short of the roadway at Fannin and Dewees, and will do that at the same time as they bore under the railroad tracks.

The City crews are continuing with the flushing protocol. They have been flushing North of Walnut and East of Fannin. Also the crews have been collecting samples for O'Malley, and noting the time it takes to reach acceptable clarity. Warschak will have a conference in Brenham next week with

O'Malley regarding the water study. Councilman Rankin asked whether the changed chemistry at the water plants have made the clarity worse. He continued by stating that he has a filter system at his house, but the discoloration still gets through. Warschak stated with the more aggressive phosphates currently being used, more of the build-up in the pipes is being broken loose. He stated that he would speak with the phosphate guys. Warschak did state the study by O'Malley will take 2 to 3 months to be completed.

Councilman Rankin asked why the water clarity varies so much. The Mayor commented that the flushing schedule had not been as aggressive as what they would like. Warschak confirmed that the flushing schedule was off. Rankin stated he hoped O'Malley will address the clarity inconsistencies in their report.

Councilwoman Gobert asked how the flushing was going from the work crews' perspective. Warschak said the first couple of days are the worst; everything is stirred up. The crews did indicate the water seems to be clearing up faster than it did the last time the lines were flushed.

Warschak stated sewer averaging was in progress, and the average water use from December 15<sup>th</sup> through February 15<sup>th</sup> will determine the customer sewer rates for the year. Rankin stated the new metering system should help with the data collection. Gobert continued on the meter system, asking how it was working. City Secretary, Bana Schneider, stated there were some glitches with the system, and the meter company was still in the process of installation. Warschak commented on the conference call between all parties involved, stating the new system is a work in progress. Rankin asked that, for the next meeting, we have an estimated completion date.

Warschak closed his report with change orders needed for the gas line project. The state highway department requires the line going in their right-of-way be coated steel and not poly pipe due to the amount of pressure going through the line. Additionally, the City will have a meter installed just downstream from the suppliers meter so the City can monitor the billed usage. Rankin asked how much the meter would cost. Warschak said approximately \$40,000, which the City would have to cover, but there was some additional funding built into the grant to cover the change in type of pipe. Lastly, Schneider commented on the case of fraud reported by a utility customer. The Shell station received a call that showed as the City's number on their caller id. The caller was asking for bank information so the customer's bill could be paid. The Mayor mentioned he had seen a notice in the paper regarding the call.

**6. Consideration and Action to Authorize the Closure of Preston Street from Back to Fannin Street on January 18, 2016, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Event.**

Mayor Dungen stated this section of Preston Street runs in front of the Methodist Church.

Councilman Schonenberg made a motion to approve the street closure as requested. Councilwoman Gobert seconded the motion.

The vote was as follows:

Ayes: Councilmen Schonenberg, Moore, Rankin and Hernandez; Councilwoman Gobert.

The motion passed.

**7. Consideration and Action to Approve the Appointment of John Brown to Fill the Position Held by Chris Arthur on the Planning and Zoning Commission Set to Expire December 2017.**

Dungen stated that Chris was retiring because of health and other reasons. He continued that John is an alternate on the Board of Adjustments.

Rankin wanted to know if this person had read the code of ordinances, and understood them. It might make sense to have an orientation and for the new members to explain what they feel their roll would be. Gobert commented that it would be helpful for Council to learn exactly what the different committees actually do. Rankin stated he would like a better understand of the workings between Planning & Zoning and Council, and their responsibilities in regards to something like the commercial corridor overlay. He feels there is no common understanding in how the relationship works. Rankin recommends an orientation, especially for P & Z members, regarding how the ordinances work. He continued that there may be a need for the City Attorney to be involved.

Councilman Rankin made a motion to approve John Brown's appointment to the Planning & Zoning Commission. Councilman Schonenberg seconded the motion.

The vote was as follows:

Ayes: Councilmen Schonenberg, Moore, Rankin and Hernandez; Councilwoman Gobert.

The motion passed.

**8. Consideration and Action to Approve the Appointment of Travis Wegenhoft to Fill the Position of Alternate Held by John Brown on The Board of Adjustments Set to Expire May 31, 2016.**

Dungen stated he had not received any paperwork back from Travis; therefore, this agenda item would be skipped.

**9. Consideration and Action, if Necessary, on the November 2015 Golf Association Report.**

Mike Craddock, Columbus Golf Association Treasurer, gave the Golf Association report for November 2015, a copy of which is attached with these minutes. Craddock thanked the Council for their involvement with the Association, and he thanked Schneider for her help with some of the accounting. Craddock continued with the details of the financial report. He gave details of the Associations plans to improve membership numbers, including the reduction of fees for groups of at least 5 from a business or non-profit organization who join at the same time.

Councilman Rankin did question the amount for payroll in the projection for December. Gobert did say that the projection was more than it will be. The Mayor stated it appeared that 6 weeks of payroll is in the December projection, not 4 weeks.

Craddock explained that many of the bills paid in November were outstanding bills prior to the City and Association taking the course back over. He also stated the condition of the equipment used to maintain the course was in poor shape.

Mayor Dungen asked what the response had been so far. Craddock indicated the feelings have been mixed. Many people think the membership rates should match those of the Weimar course. Weimar memberships are \$400 and our course membership fees are \$480.

Councilman Moore asked Craddock if he had been a member of the board before the course went to private management, and how he found the condition of the financial records. Craddock said it was very poor, and he has been spending several hours a day going through them. Rankin then asked about the status of the taxes. Craddock assured him they were current on all payroll and sales taxes.

Rankin voiced his concern about the upcoming expenses and if there would be enough to sustain the course. Gobert commented the budgeted funds for the course were \$42,000 and \$25,000 of that had already been spent. Rankin stated that the membership needed to be at least 150 members for the course to be viable. Gobert suggested radio advertising. Dungen said they are planning on doing tournaments to bring people in.

Warschak asked what kind of expenses related to course maintenance were coming up. Craddock said they will need fertilizer and repairs to the sprinkler, in addition to sorting out the equipment situation.

**10. Consideration and Action, if Necessary, on the November 2015 Code Enforcement Report.**

Code Enforcement officer, Ford Stein, gave his October and November Code Enforcement reports, copies of which are attached to these minutes.

Councilman Rankin commented on a property he feels is non-compliant within the Code of Ordinances. He stated the main elements of Planning & Zoning were to make sure codes were adhered to and to ensure property values were maintained. He continued by saying if that is the case, then this property, at 700 Milam, should be looked at. Additionally, he wants to make sure the rules are being applied to all properties. Rankin showed a picture of the structure and, he felt the condition of the property did not reflect the goals of P & Z. Councilman Moore asked if there were

any occupants in the building. Rankin replied at least one apartment is rented, but the other 3 appear to be vacant.

Dungen asked Stein what the process would be if a property is believed to be in noncompliance of an ordinance. Stein stated, first, an attempt to contact the property owner would be made to see if they can remedy the problem. How to proceed would also depend on what type of noncompliance existed. Rankin commented that the ordinance states that a list of nonconforming properties should be maintained, and that through Planning & Zoning, noncompliance should be discouraged from continuing. He feels a list should be started to include major nonconforming properties. The Mayor stated with a list, properties could be prioritized based on the more serious noncompliance issues. Gobert stated she liked the idea of a list, especially within the different zoning categories. Rankin stated he would like this list initiated either by Code Enforcement or the City Manager, and he would keep asking about its status. Moore asked how many of the properties with issues have absentee landlords. Stein indicated he had no idea about the number of absentee landlords owning property in the City. Rankin commented that it does not matter if the landlords are absent or not, as long as they obey the rules. Stein stated that there were a few properties that were in very poor condition, but they have gone on tax sales. His experience has been that new owners typically start tearing down the dilapidated structures. He continued saying he did have his eye on a particular property that is in very bad shape. For him, it is a priority since it is near the Junior High and kids pass it every day. Gobert commented it would be great to get a list of properties under scrutiny every quarter.

**11. Items from Councilmembers.<sup>2</sup>**

Councilman Moore – None

Councilwoman Gobert – Asked for reporting of utility revenues, possibly quarterly.

Councilman Schonenberg – None

Councilman Hernandez – None

Councilman Rankin – None

Mayor Dungen – None

**6. Announcements.**

The City Secretary announced the Holiday Party would be on December 18<sup>th</sup> at Los Cabos, and Council should have received their invitations. Additionally, she stated if anyone from Council would like to donate a door prize for the party, it would be greatly appreciated.

The Mayor reminded Council that the next meeting is slated for Monday, December 21st at Noon.

**7. Adjournment.**

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 7:41 p.m.



Mayor, Dwain Dungen

ATTEST:



Bana Schneider, City Secretary

<sup>1</sup>During 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.

<sup>2</sup>Limited 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.

