

The City Council of the City of Columbus, Texas met in regular session on Monday, June 22, 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
Code/Fire Assistant	-	Duane Naiser

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 Minutes of the June 8, 2020 Regular Meeting
- c. Approval of the February 2020 Financial Statements

Councilwoman Frnka made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Councilman Cummings 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 Sales Tax, Water Filtration Project and Water Well Rehab Project Updates.

City Manager, Donald Warschak, gave his report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. Warschak stated the sales tax the City received from the April collections was approximately \$5,000 less than the same time period last year. He indicated the cities of Eagle Lake and Weimar also saw decreases while the County saw an increase.

Warschak said WesTech was working to schedule the technicians to come and put the Hill Plant's filtration system online.

Regarding the Water Well Rehab Project, Warschak stated the contractor is working to install all of the equipment back into the Pool Well. Once that is completed, they will begin work on the Tait Well.

Councilwoman Frnka asked about the land listed in the newspaper as having been purchased by HEB. Warschak stated it appears to be the property where Wal-Mart is located. It appears HEB has taken over the property management of the land.

6. Consideration and Action to Approve Modifications and Extension of the Disaster Declaration Dated June 19, 2020.

Mayor Gobert stated there were 13 news cases reported in the County today, bringing the total cases to 71. There are 46 active cases, 25 recovered cases, and 3 hospitalizations. Only one of the hospitalizations is in the City, and that person is from Fayette County. She also stated there are 19 active cases at a local summer camp.

Gobert said the Governor spoke this afternoon and encouraged everyone to wear masks. EMS is also stressing the importance of continuing preventative measures.

Free testing will be available in the County on June 28 in Eagle Lake, July 11 in Weimar, and July 18 at the fairgrounds.

Gobert also stated there are 3 positive cases at a local nursing home, and 147 people have been tested at that location. She said with the uptick in cases, she felt it was important to implement a new disaster declaration.

Chris Christenson spoke to Council regarding the new order. He stated he had become aware of it the day before, when he went to Wal-Mart and they were requiring the wearing of masks. He is concerned about the City's order since the Governor is only encouraging the use of masks not requiring them. Christenson also spoke about several studies and the differing opinions concerning masks. He also had concerns about the PPE industry and its control by the communist Chinese. Gobert stated she did not think the declaration was unrealistic. If 6 foot social distancing cannot be maintained, then face coverings should be worn. With the number of cases increasing in the County, this is a health and safety measure, not a political one. He asked when this was ever going to end. Gobert stated when cases start to subside. She said she wanted businesses to be able to remain open, and keep the case numbers as low as possible.

Councilman Rankin stated businesses can say employees and visitors must wear a mask.

Frnka stated it is not a big deal to wear a mask. There are a lot of people who are making sacrifices to keep others safe. We want the people of Columbus to be safe.

There was a discussion concerning enforcement of the declaration. The Mayor stated she did not want to include fines as part of the declaration. Police Chief Edman stated if a citation is issued, it would be up to a \$1,000 fine and up to six months in jail. Edman stated if businesses set the rules for masks like the "no shoes, no shirts, no service", and a patron refuses to wear a mask, they can be asked to leave. If they do not comply, then the patron could be charged with criminal trespass. Gobert stated it will not be up to the individual, but to the businesses. Christenson stated it sounds like you are encouraging businesses to make their own choice about who enters their business. Gobert stated absolutely. Councilman Ridlen stated paragraph 3 seems to apply to the public at large, not just businesses. There was a discussion regarding the intent of paragraph 3, and suggestions for changes to the paragraph.

Chamber Executive Director, Billy Kahn, stated he represents commerce in the City, and his job is to help businesses succeed. On one hand a voice says let everyone do what they want, and on the other hand, what good is keeping them open if more people get sick and die, and the businesses ultimately close down. Kahn said the last few months, it has been left up to the businesses and most people have not been wearing masks. He said he would look to City Council for guidance to help keep everyone safe.

Councilman Rankin made a motion to extend the declaration until Council took further action, and to modify the declaration by amending the first sentence of paragraph 2 to include "10 years and older." Also to add the last sentence of paragraph 3 to the end of paragraph 2, and strike paragraph 3 from the declaration. 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 the Bid for the Library Roof Project.

Warschak stated bids were taken last week. Lessman Roofing was the lowest bidder. He stated he had contacted references and all of the reviews were favorable. He stated the bid included a membrane roof and gutter work.

There was a discussion regarding the discrepancies in the bidding.

Warschak recommended awarding the job to Lessman.

Councilman Rankin made a motion to award the Library Roof Project to Lessman Roofing. Councilman Ridlen seconded the motion.

The vote was as follows:

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

The motion passed.

8. Consideration and Action to Authorize the Mayor to Enter the City of Columbus into a Contract for Audit Services.

City Secretary, Bana Schneider, stated bids for the contract were received today, with three bids being accepted. She stated the low bidder only provided costs for one year based on 120 hours to conduct the audit. The current auditors, Patillo, Brown & Hill's bid was based on 287 hours, with the high bidder's costs based on 252 audit hours.

Schneider recommended the contract be awarded to Patillo, Brown and Hill.

Councilman Ridlen made a motion to award the audit contract to Patillo, Brown & Hill, LLP. Councilwoman Frnka 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 Appointment of Lois Robinson to the Library Advisory Board for a Term Ending April 1, 2024.

Library Director, Susan Chandler, stated she felt Robinson would be a good addition to the board. Gobert stated she appears to be very engaged with the library.

Councilwoman Frnka approved the appointment of Lois Robinson to the Library Advisory 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 Approve a 2019-2020 Budget Amendment for a Library Grant and Associated Expenditures.

Chandler stated this was for the Dumraese Grant. She upgraded lighting and security cameras in the library.

Councilman Rankin made a motion to approve the budget amendment for the library. Councilman Cummings 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 Approve a 2019-2020 Budget Amendment for an Administrative Grant and Associated Expenditures.

Schneider stated this was for the grant received from CCIDC for the Texas A&M study.

Councilwoman Frnka made a motion to approve the administrative budget amendment. Councilman Cummings 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 Approve a Bid for the Purchase of a Breathing Air Compressor for the Fire Department.

Code Enforcement Officer, Richard LaCourse, stated the fire department had \$10,000 in their budget for maintenance on the current compressor, but the current brand will no longer be made, and in two years parts will not be available. He recommended going with the Metro Fire bid.

Schneider stated she would also try to use coronavirus funding for the amount over the \$10,000 currently in the budget since the hospital asked for the help with filling their breathing air bottles. She said she had spoken with the City Attorney and he agreed the cost should be an eligible use of the CRF.

There was a discussion about the differences in the cost of the units. Ridlen asked if there was any other funding for this equipment besides the City. LaCourse stated the department had received some funding from the County, but they could use that money on a different project.

Councilman Swindle made a motion to approve the bid from Metro Fire. 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, if Necessary, Regarding the May 2020 Fire Marshal Report.

LaCourse gave the Fire Marshal report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. He stated the Fire Marshal had applied for the Dixon Allen Foundation grant for the Fire Department. The department is asking for a swift water rescue flat bottom boat with side scanning sonar. Currently only one fire fighter in the department is swift water certified so 6 firefighters will be attending school in New Braunfels at the end of July.

No action was required.

14. Consideration and Action, if Necessary, Regarding the May 2020 Code Enforcement Report.

LaCourse gave his report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. He gave an overview of the permits issued for the month, including the permit for CISD's new softball facility. He also stated he had received the new code books from the ICC.

No action was required.

15. Consideration and Action, if Necessary, Regarding May 2020 Police Report.

Chief Edman gave the police report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. Edman highlighted department training, including firearms qualifications. He spoke about the Police Memorial Week and the recent Juneteenth Parade. Also, two officers achieved higher licenses during the month.

No action was required.

16. Items from Councilmembers.²

Councilman Cummings – None

Councilman Ridlen – Thanked the Mayor for working so hard for the citizens. She has taken a lot of heat, and has been shielding Council from the blowback. Ridlen stated he was willing to help in any way he could. He applauds all she is doing for the City.

Councilman Swindle – None

Councilwoman Frnka – None

Councilman Rankin – None

Mayor Gobert – None

17. Announcements.

Schneider stated Council had received the proposed sign ordinance from Planning & Zoning. The ordinance will be on an agenda for approval in the near future.

18. Adjournment.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 6:43 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.