

The City Council of the City of Columbus, Texas met in regular session on Monday, May 11, 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:

Police Chief	-	Skip Edman
Code Enforcement	-	Richard LaCourse

1. Call to Order.

Mayor Lori An Gobert called the meeting to order at 5:32 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 April 27, 2020 Regular Meeting
- c. Approval of Minutes of the May 1, 2020 Special Meeting
- d. Approval of the December 2019 Financial Statements

Councilman Swindle made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. 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.

Comments were made during specific agenda items.

5. City Manager's Report Including Sales Tax, Updates for the Water Filtration and the Water Well Rehab Projects, and Previews for the North River Drive Outfall Storm Sewer Repairs, 2020 Sewer Line Improvements, and Library Roof Projects.

City Manager, Donald Warschak, gave the report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. Warschak stated the sales tax payment the City received for the month of May was up over \$22,000 from the same time period last year. The County and the Cities of Eagle Lake and Weimar all saw increases as well.

Regarding the water filtration system, Warschak stated the filters at the Tait and Spring plants were both operational, and he said WesTech was scheduling the startup visit for the Hill location.

Regarding the water well rehabilitation project, Warschak stated the contractor has cleaned the well screens and is ordering new pumping equipment.

Warschak previewed several projects that are in the works. The North River Drive Outfall, located near the end of North River Drive and the Colorado River, suffered damage during Hurricane Harvey. These repairs are out for bids. The 2020 Sewer Line Improvement Project has also gone out for bids. This project consists of rehabilitating sanitary sewer lines on Fannin Street between Spring and Washington Streets, on Milam Street between Malleck and Preston, and on Tait Street from Charter to the WWTP. Warschak stated he was currently preparing bid specifications for the installation of a new roof for the library.

There was a discussion regarding the library operating hours. Councilwoman Frnka asked if the library would need to be closed during the roof installation. Warschak stated they would be able to remain open.

Councilman Ridlen asked about the time frame for sales tax collections. There was discussion regarding internet sales.

6. Consideration and Action to Approve Ordinance 233-20, an Ordinance Modifying the Hotel Occupancy Tax Reporting and Payment Schedule.

Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, Billy Kahn, addressed Council about the importance of supporting the local hotels. He asked Council to do whatever they could to ease the burden on the hoteliers.

America's Best Value Inn owner, Mr. Patel, also spoke to Council about the hardships hotels are currently facing with occupancy rates down over 80%. He stated the hotel occupancy tax was not as much of a burden as property tax, property insurance, and franchise taxes.

City Secretary, Bana Schneider, stated based on the discussion at the last meeting, she sent an inquiry to the City Attorney regarding modifying the HOT payment schedule. The attorney confirmed the ordinance would need to be amended to implement a payment plan. There was a discussion regarding the time frame for extending payment plan options. Mayor Gobert stated she was concerned that it would only apply to the first two quarters of 2020. Councilman Rankin stated the payment plans should be extended for all quarters of calendar year 2020.

Councilwoman Frnka made a motion to approve Ordinance 233-20 with the modifications of offering payment plans for HOT collections effective for the entire calendar year of 2020. Councilman Rankin seconded the motion.

The vote was as followed:

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

The motion passed.

7. Consideration and Action to Approve Telephone Service Proposal and Equipment Rental Agreement.

Schneider stated they were looking at upgrading to a VOIP telephone system. She explained the proposal, and relayed the advice she received from the attorney. Schneider also stated the monthly charge for phone service would be reduced approximately \$300 per month. Gobert stated they use a VOIP system at their clinic, and they would never go back to a traditional telephone system.

Ridlen asked if we would be losing any capabilities with this new system. Schneider stated capabilities would actually be greater with the new system. She also stated, even if this system was not approved, the telephone handsets are going to need to be replaced soon. Many are very scratchy and getting hard to hear over.

Councilman Ridlen made a motion to approve the proposal and agreement. Councilman Cummings seconded the motion.

The vote was as followed:

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

The motion passed.

8. Consideration and Action, if Necessary, Regarding the April Golf Association Report.

Council reviewed the financial reports which are attached to these minutes. There was also a discussion regarding the temporary course closure because of COVID-19.

No action was taken.

9. Items from Councilmembers.²

Councilman Cummings – None

Councilman Ridlen – Little League met last night, and many kids and parents want to play. They are planning on moving forward as if play could start on the 18th of May. He stated international and state tournaments have been cancelled so if play does open up, district is the furthest teams will be able to advance.

Councilman Swindle – None

Councilwoman Frnka – In honor of Nurses Week, she thanked the Mayor for all of her hard work.

Councilman Rankin – None

Mayor Gobert – Mitigation funding for Hurricane Harvey has been announced. Projects of \$3-\$5 million are competitive with a 1% local match required. A possible project for the City would be to move the wastewater treatment plant #1 a few hundred yards up the hill from its current location. Gobert also stated there are 5 active cases of COVID-19 in the county. 76 tests were conducted last Friday. Councilman Swindle asked about the status of summer camps. Gobert stated the task force is currently contemplating summer camps and reopening of bars.

10. Announcements.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, May 26, 2020.

11. Adjournment.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 6:20 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 council members 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.