



The City of West University Place

A Neighborhood City

CITY COUNCIL

Bob Higley, Mayor
Kevin Trautner, Mayor Pro Tem
John P. Barnes, Councilmember
Lauri Lankford, Councilmember
Ed Sobash, Councilmember

STAFF

David J. Beach, City Manager
Alan Petrov, City Attorney
Thelma Gilliam, City Secretary

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

The City Council of the City of West University Place, Texas, **met via Zoom** in a special meeting on **Monday, January 11, 2021**, beginning at **5:30 p.m.** due to social distancing guidelines suggested by the CDC in light of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID 19).

WORKSHOP (5:30 p.m.)

1. Call Workshop to Order/Roll Call

Mayor Higley called the virtual workshop to order at 5:30 p.m. Mayor Pro Tem Trautner and Councilmembers Barnes, Lankford and Sobash were all present.

Staff present were City Manager Beach, City Attorney Petrov, City Secretary Gilliam, Public Works Director Barrera, and Assistant to the City Manager Thompson.

Evan Duvall with BBG Consulting was also present.

2. Network Facilities 5G

Matters related to network facilities 5G. **Mr. Gerardo Barrera, Public Works Director**

Public Works Director presented and gave a brief presentation on 5G and small cell node requirements and locations in West University Place.

Evan Duvall with BBG Consulting spoke regarding current adopted regulations, policy changes, and modifications to the Design Manual related to 5G and small cell nodes in the City.

Mr. Duvall said the Design Manual was removed from the ordinance to allow the City to make changes as warranted. The modifications and policy changes being proposed are:

- Strengthening the requirement for co-location on existing CenterPoint or other utility poles in order to have less poles in the right-of-way.
- Requiring photo-simulation for every small cell nodes.
- Consideration to allow a streetlight replacement option for stealth small cell nodes.
- Paint meter pedestals and match required pedestal color indicated in Design Manual.

In response to a question about the benefits of 5G to West U residents, Mr. DuVall said long-term, if left out of this technology, residents of West U would experience a decrease amount of internet speed.

Further discussion ensued, including whether or not 5G is necessary.

City Manager Beach reiterated the proposed modifications.

Council also agreed, with the exception of Councilmember Lankford, for staff to move forward with the 50-foot restriction pending further information.

After discussion, the majority of Council did not wish to move forward with streetlight replacements.

At 6:27 p.m., Mayor Higley adjourned the workshop.

Audio of the full discussion is available on the City's website. You can also contact the City Secretary's office for a copy of the audio and/or a copy of the presentation.

REGULAR MEETING (6:30 p.m.)

3. Call Regular Meeting to Order/Roll Call

Mayor Higley called the virtual meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Mayor Pro Tem Trautner and Councilmembers Barnes, Lankford and Sobash were all present.

Staff present were City Manager Beach, City Attorney Petrov, City Secretary Gilliam, Public Works Director Barrera, Assistant to the City Manager Thompson, Police Chief Walker, Fire Chief Thompson, Human Resources Director Urban, Finance Director DuBose, Parks and Recreation Director White, Friends Executive Director LaMond, and Public Works Crew Chief Graham

4. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Higley and Councilmembers Lankford and Sobash led the Pledge.

5. Public Comments

This is an opportunity for citizens to speak to the Council relating to agenda and non-agenda items.

Dick Yehle, 6104 Rutgers, spoke to ask that Council and staff consider improving communications with the public during online meetings. He made the following suggestions: (1) start all meetings at or near the posted time; (2) find some way to notify the public in the online "waiting room" of the reason for delays; create a distress number that the public can call during a meeting; and (3) establish a protocol where the public, staff and councilmembers can be muted when they are not actively speaking, which could solve a lot of the problems with audio interference.

6. Employee of the Year

Matters related to recognizing the City's Employee of the Year. **Mr. James Urban, HR Director**

Human Resources Director Urban presented and, after a few comments, announced Public Works Crew Chief Jonathan Graham as the Employee of the Year.

7. Appointment to the Friends of West U Parks Fund Board

Matters related to appointing a member to the Friends of West U Parks Fund Board. *Recommended Action: Appoint Kelly Hill to Position 19. Ms. Donna LaMond, Executive Director of FWUPF*

Councilmember Sobash moved to approve the appointment of Kelly Hill to Position 19 of the Friends of West U Parks Fund Board for a term beginning on January 11, 2021 and expiring on August 31, 2023. Councilmember Barnes seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED.**

Ayes: Higley, Trautner, Barnes, Lankford, Sobash
Noes: None
Absent: None

8. COVID-19 Update

Matters related to COVID-19. *Recommended Action: Discuss and take any desired action.* **Mr. Aaron Taylor, Fire Chief and Emergency Management Coordinator**

Chief Taylor reported:

- State of Texas has shifted its priority regarding distribution of the vaccine and created vaccination hubs.
- Harris County has three hubs – Harris County Public Health, Houston Health Department and Methodist.
- In Texas, the third wave of COVID-19 is still progressing. There were large spikes in the data 4-5 days after Christmas and New Year’s Day.
- As of Friday, there were 18,900 new cases confirmed in Texas.
- West U has 424 confirmed cases – 123 are active, 301 have recovered, and 0 deaths.
- Positivity rate in Texas is steady at 18.71 percent.
- Positivity rate in Harris County has increased to 18.8 percent.
- The Texas Medical Center reported a 13.5 percent positivity rate.

In response to Mayor Higley’s question whether West U Parks should close, Chief Taylor replied not at this time and said staff is looking to the state and county for guidance on any additional restrictions.

Regarding new strands of the virus, Chief Taylor said the same precautions that protected people from the beginning are still effective with the new strand.

9. Utility Accounts Bad Debt Write-Off

Matters related to writing off bad debts related to outstanding utility account balances. *Recommended Action: Authorize approval for staff to write-off bad debt in the amount of \$218,641.71 for utility account balances prior to 2018.* **Ms. Katherine DuBose, Finance Director**

Finance Director DuBose presented and said staff performed a review of outstanding utility account balances and discovered that inactive accounts dating back to 1999 are being reported as receivables. She said as a best practice, accounts older than 3 years should be considered uncollectable and written off as bad debt.

Ms. DuBose said with the addition of a collection agency approved by Council in December, staff will be implementing improvements to the process and that staff will now bring debt write-offs before Council on an annual basis to prevent large write-offs in the future.

Mayor Trautner confirmed with Ms. DuBose that this is an accounting issue and has no impact to the 2021 Budget.

Councilmember Barnes moved to approve that Council write-off bad debt in the amount of \$218,641.71 for utility account balances prior to 2018. Councilmember Sobash seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED.**

Ayes: Higley, Trautner, Barnes, Lankford, Sobash
Noes: None
Absent: None

10. Consent Agenda

All Consent Agenda items listed are considered to be routine by the City Council and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Council member requests in which event the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered in its normal sequence on the agenda.

A. City Council Minutes

Approve Minutes of the Meeting of December 14, 2020. *Recommended Action: Approve City Council Minutes of December 14, 2020. Ms. Thelma Gilliam, City Secretary*

B. Lease Agreement – 5004 Dincans

Matters related to approving lease for use by SER Construction Group during reconstruction of Buffalo Speedway. *Recommended Action: Approve lease agreement with SER Construction group for temporary use of a portion of the City's property located at 5004 Dincans. Mr. Gerardo Barrera, Public Works Director*

Councilmember Lankford requested removal of Item 10B from the Consent Agenda for discussion.

Councilmember Sobash moved to approve the Consent Agenda without 10B. Councilmember Barnes seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED.**

Ayes: Higley, Trautner, Barnes, Lankford, Sobash
Noes: None
Absent: None

Regarding Item 10B, Councilmember Lankford asked that staff be cautious referring to the agreement as a license agreement rather than a lease agreement.

Councilmember Sobash moved to approve Item 10B. Councilmember Barnes seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED.**

Ayes: Higley, Trautner, Barnes, Lankford, Sobash
Noes: None
Absent: None

11. Executive Session Related to Personnel

City Council will convene into executive session in accordance with the following provision of Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code (TGC):

- **Section 551.074** – City Manager Evaluation

At 7:07 p.m., Mayor Higley recessed the regular meeting and convened executive session.

12. Adjourn Executive Session / Reconvene Regular Meeting

Matters related to any desired action resulting from the executive session. City Council may take action on the matters discussed in Executive Session as deemed Appropriate.

At 8:14 p.m., Mayor Higley adjourned the executive session and reconvened the workshop with the following action:

Councilmember Sobash moved that Council approve the city manager's salary to include 2.5 percent adjustment and 1.5 for performance for a 4 percent total adjustment to his annual compensation. Councilmember Barnes seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED.**

Ayes: Higley, Trautner, Barnes, Lankford, Sobash
Noes: None
Absent: None

13. Adjourn Regular Meeting

Councilmember Barnes moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m. Councilmember Barnes seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED.**

Ayes: Higley, Trautner, Barnes, Lankford, Sobash
Noes: None
Absent: None

Audio of the meeting is available on the City's website. You can also contact the City Secretary's office for a copy of the audio and any handouts/presentations.

Prepared by: City Secretary Thelma A. Gilliam

Approved by City Council on: January 25, 2021