



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
Scott Bounds, City Attorney, Olson and Olson
Thelma Gilliam, City Secretary

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

The City Council of the City of West University Place, Texas, **met via Zoom** in a workshop and regular meeting on **Monday, March 22, 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 meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Mayor Pro Tem Trautner and Councilmembers Barnes, Lankford and Sobash were all present.

Staff present were City Manager Beach, City Attorney Bounds, City Secretary Gilliam, Police Chief Walker, Sergeant Support Services Ly, Assistant to the City Manager Thompson, and Police Dispatcher Emily Beard.

2. Virtual Gate Project

Matters related to an update on Phase I and discussion on Phase II of the Virtual Gate project. **Mr. Ken Walker, Police Chief**

Police Chief Walker gave a presentation that summarized the following:

- Houston's Police Chief twice stated that Houston is looking at another huge year for homicides.
- Fewer people are applying to become police officers.
- More officers are leaving their departments, and in many cases, leaving the policing profession well before they reach retirement age.
- A growing number of current officers are becoming eligible for retirement.

Chief Walker provided stats for Phase I of Virtual Gate:

- During one hour on March 16, 2021, there were 499 LPR reads with only 14 to be inaccurate. He noted that the inaccuracies could be for various reasons, mostly due to paper plates which accounts for a 97.2 accuracy rate.
- Phase I has 15 locations. The remaining eight (8) locations are within the City of Houston's Right-of-Way and staff is working its way through the permitting process.

After Chief Walker's update, Police Dispatcher Beard gave a presentation on the operational side of Virtual Gate and answered questions from Council.

City Manager Beach noted the tentative timeline for Virtual Gate – Phase II:

- Council award April 12, 2021
- Notice to Proceed May 3, 2021 (no later)
- Permitting/Construction May – November 2021

Mayor Pro Tem Trautner recommended proceeding as promptly as reasonably practical.

Councilmember Sobash said he is disappointed with the results of Phase I. He said he sees a lot of promise, but he was expecting more hard results at the end of Phase I. He said it feels like Council is moving forward, and he thinks it should, without evidence that the system is turning into the expectations set out for it.

Chief Walker said Phase I is still not complete as more cameras will be installed. He said he was surprised at the number of hits already received and that he is confident in the system and convinced that it will pay off.

Councilmember Barnes confirmed with Public Works Director Barrera that the installation of cameras will not warrant the removal of any trees.

3. Adjourn Workshop

At 6:25 p.m., Mayor Higley closed the workshop.

A copy of the workshop audio in its entirety is on the City's website or a copy of the audio and/or presentation can be obtained from the City Secretary's office.

REGULAR MEETING (6:30 p.m.)

4. 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 Secretary Gilliam, City Attorney Bounds, Public Works Director Barrera, Assistant to the City Manager Thompson, Police Chief Walker, Finance Director DuBose, IT Director Davenport, Communications Coordinator Cuccerre, Chief Building Official Chew, and Fire Chief Taylor.

Richard Wilson, Chair of the Zoning and Planning Commission and Evan Duvall, BBG Consultants

5. Pledge of Allegiance

Councilmembers Lankford and Sobash led the Pledge.

6. Public Comments

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

Alida Drewes, 6112 Fordham, was signed up to speak, but did not answer when called upon to do so.

Melanie Bell, 3123 Plumb Street, spoke regarding water fountains around the City. She asked whether all the water fountains in the City would be turned back on and in what timeframe. City Manager Beach said staff would research the issue and contact her with the findings.

7. COVID-19

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:

- COVID positivity rates, cases, and hospitalization rates continue to drop.
- City staff is looking to start phasing back in senior programs.
- COVID hospitalizations for the region dropped to 8.31
- Texas has been below the 15 percent threshold since February 9.
- Only 2,400 new cases reported in Texas as of March 20.
- The positivity rates for Texas is 5.76 percent; Harris County is at 10 percent; the Texas Medical Center is at 5.3 percent.
- Texas Medical Center is reporting that the ICU status is back within Phase I capacity.
- West University Place has 559 total confirmed cases; 13 active cases; 543 recovered cases; and 0-5 deaths. Harris County and City of Houston merged databases, so it may be that the City now has three deaths. Chief Taylor said the City no longer has access to the same database for information, but will try to confirm the number of deaths.
- Vaccine data indicates that 22% of Texans have received at least the first dose of the vaccine and 11% are fully vaccinated.

8. Zoning Ordinance Amendments

Matters related to amending the Zoning Ordinance. *Recommended Action: Approve ordinance amending the Zoning Ordinance on the first of two readings.* **Mr. Gerardo Barrera, Public Works Director**

Public Works Director Barrera began the discussion and stated that the proposed ordinance is the result of comments received at the Joint Public Hearing held on March 11, 2021.

Zoning and Planning Commission Chair Wilson spoke to say that at the suggestion of the City's new attorneys, the language regarding through lots was slightly tweaked from what was presented at the Joint Public Hearing. Mr. Wilson noted that the tweak does not change the intent as it was just clean up to remediate the unintended consequence from the literal definition currently in the ordinance.

Councilmember Lankford inquired about the "no street access" language relating to through lots. City Attorney Bounds said the intent when drafting the ordinance was "vehicular access" and suggested that Council propose that the language define "access" as "vehicular access" and he will include the change in the ordinance for approval on second reading.

Regarding pervious areas, Chair Wilson stated that since the Joint Public Hearing a new proposed Note 7 was added. He said the proposed ordinance states that all pervious area required in the front yard, which is 50 percent, must be natural vegetation or landscape areas that receive rainwater and allow it to pass through or be absorbed.

In response to a question by Councilmember Lankford, Mr. Wilson said the intent of the ordinance as drafted is to allow Astroturf in front yards, provided that it is actually pervious.

Evan Duvall, consultant, stated that the intent of the added note was to make sure that pervious pavers of any type couldn't be no more than 50 percent maximum, but ZPC did want to give allowance for AstroTurf and gravel as long as they are considered landscape areas.

Councilmember Lankford moved to accept the Zoning amendment to Appendix A, Article 7, Section 7-101, Table 7-3 and Table 7-5a on the first of two readings. Councilmember Sobash seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED.**

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

Councilmember Lankford moved to accept the Zoning Ordinance amendment with the one change to the through lot ordinance (Appendix A, Article 7, Table 7-2 Note 1), adding "vehicular access" on the first of two readings. Councilmember Sobash seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED.**

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

9. Report from the Zoning and Planning Commission Regarding Municipal Overlay

Matters related to a report from the Zoning and Planning Commission regarding Municipal Overlay. *Recommended Action. Receive report. Mr. Gerardo Barrera Public Works Director and Mr. Richard Wilson, Chair of the Zoning and Planning Commission.*

Zoning and Planning Commission Chair Wilson stated that, essentially, the proposal is to put all city-owned properties into an overlay district. He said the Zoning and Planning Commission (ZPC) wants feedback from Council because one of the sections categorically exempts the City from broad sections of the ordinance and ZPC had some concerns. He said there is a lack of enthusiasm on the ZPC about pushing this any further, but wanted feedback from Council.

After a brief discussion, City Manager Beach withdrew this item from further discussion as there seems no desire to move forward on it.

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 regular meeting of February 22, 2021.

B. Budget Amendment

Matters related to an ordinance amending the 2021 Budget for purchase order rollovers, capital project carryovers, and fund balance transfer. *Recommended Action: Approve ordinance on the first and final reading. Ms. Katherine DuBose, Finance Director*

C. Purchasing Policy

Matters related to a resolution adopting the City's proposed purchasing policy. Recommendation: *Approve resolution adopting the City's purchasing policy. Ms. Katherine DuBose, Finance Director*

D. Accept Study Reports

Matters related to accepting reports of completed studies. Mr. Gerardo Barrera, Public Works Director: *Recommended Action: Accept studies.* **Mr. Gerardo Barrera, Public Works Director**

E. Storage Area Network and Backup Infrastructure Replacement

Matters related to amending the 2021 Budget and approving a contract to replace the City's Storage Area Network (SAN) and backup infrastructure. *Recommended Action: Amend the 2021 Budget and approve contract.* **Mr. Kevin Davenport, IT**

F. 30-Day Extension to Memorandum of Understanding with West U Baptist Church

Matters related to approving a Memorandum of Understanding with West University Baptist Church for parking lot usage. *Recommended Action: Approve Memorandum of Understanding with the West University Baptist Church and authorize the City Manager execute the Memorandum of Understanding.* **Mr. Gerardo Barrera, Public Works Director**

Councilmember Lankford requested to remove Item 10B from the Consent Agenda for discussion.

Councilmember Sobash moved to approve the Consent Agenda, with the exception of Item 10B as presented. Councilmember Barnes seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED.**

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

Councilmember Lankford had a question regarding "administration" under the General Fund relating to Poor Farm Ditch. She said she thought this was an item at the beginning of this Council's term so she was surprised to see it lopping into 2021. City Manager Beach responded and confirmed that this was an item at the beginning of this Council's term. He said the funds are associated with engineering costs related to the Poor Farm Ditch project.

Mayor Higley clarified that the City wants to have a memorialization of the plan that this Council produced in the first few months of their term. He said this Council would like to project to the Harris County Flood Control District that West U and Southside Place agree to the plan. He said the City will be contacting Southside Place to get a response or the City will move forward on its own.

Councilmember Lankford also questioned the line item "engineering services for legal services," which Finance Director DuBose noted was a typographical error. Ms. DuBose said it should be "legal services" only.

With no further questions, Councilmember Barnes moved to approve Item B. Councilmember Lankford seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED.**

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

11. Recess Regular Meeting and Convene into Executive Session

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

Mayor Higley recessed the regular meeting at 7:07 p.m., to convene an execution session in accordance with Section 551.071 of the Texas Government Code to conduct a private consultation with the City's attorneys.

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 7:20 p.m., Mayor Higley adjourned the executive session and resumed the regular meeting. No Action taken.

13. Adjourn Regular Meeting

At 7:20 p.m., Councilmember Barnes moved to adjourn the meeting. Councilmember Lankford seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED.**

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

Prepared by: City Secretary Gilliam
Approved by Council: April 12, 2021