



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 MINUTES

The City Council of the City of West University Place, Texas, remotely met in a workshop and regular session on **Monday, August 10, 2020**, at **6:15 p.m.** in the Municipal Building located at 3800 University Boulevard.

Agenda items were as follows:

WORKSHOP (6:15 PM)

1. Call Workshop to Order / Roll Call

Mayor Higley called the workshop to order remotely from the Bill Watson Conference Room at 6:15 p.m. Mayor Pro Tem Trautner, Councilmembers Barnes, Lankford and Sobash were in attendance via video/teleconference.

Staff: City Manager Beach, City Secretary Gilliam, Police Chief Walker, Public Works Director Barrera, and Assistant to the City Manager Thompson were physically present in the Council Chambers. City Attorney Petrov attended via video/teleconference.

2. Boards and Commission

Matters related to Boards and Commissions. *City Council*

Mayor Higley presented and said the workshop is being held to discuss the appointment of a member to the Building and Standards Commission due to the resignation of Mimi Tsai who will be moving out of West U.

City Manager Beach reminded Council that the workshop is for Council to discuss the candidates and that an item to make appointments, if any, is on the regular agenda.

Councilmember Sobash recommended that alternate Gerry Spedale be moved up to the regular position because he is currently serving and would make a great member of the BSC. Mayor Pro Tem Trautner agreed.

Councilmember Barnes recommended Diana Pardo Rodriguez who is also currently serving as an alternate.

Councilmember Lankford said when Council made appointments to boards and commissions a year ago, attendance and getting new people involved were two of the factors considered. She said with respect to the BSC alternates, Eddie Matthews is the only one with 5 out of 5 attendance and Diana Pardo Rodriguez is the worse with 1 out of 5 meetings attended, Jonathon Hance attended 4 out of 5

meetings and Gerry Spedale attended 3 out of 5 meetings. Councilmember Lankford said based on attendance and the fact that he is someone newly involved, she recommends Jonathon Hance.

Councilmember Barnes withdrew his recommendation with respect to Diana Pardo Rodriguez based on attendance and now thinks that Jonathon Hance might be the better choice.

Mayor Pro Tem Trautner said as an alternate, Mr. Spedale is up to speed and is also “new blood” to the extent that he is relatively a younger professional with great analytical skills, is personable, and cares about the City. Mayor Pro Tem Trautner also said he took the liberty of speaking with Mr. Spedale about his attendance and his first two absences were due to emergency work matters, but he expects that with being able to attend remotely it will not be an issue going forward. He said he thinks Gerry is a great candidate.

Councilmember Sobash said he has known Gerry for a long time and though he hasn’t had the pleasure of serving on a Board with Gerry he would love to do so.

Mayor Pro Tem Trautner said he has had the opportunity to work with Gerry and said he does excellent work in terms of being detailed oriented, he is able to see the forest for the trees at a high level and he takes the pragmatic approach to issues. He said he thinks Gerry is the kind of person needed on a committee like this.

Councilmember Langford said Mr. Spedale and Mr. Hance have lawyer backgrounds. She said she doesn’t know either of them personally, but favors the ones that put in the time and attends the meetings.

Regarding the alternate position, Councilmember Lankford suggested Grayson Bush being that he is a mechanical engineer.

There was no further recommendations for the alternate position and no further discussion.

3. Adjourn Workshop

Mayor Higley adjourned the workshop at approximately 6:29 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING (6:30 PM)

4. Call Regular Meeting to Order

Mayor Higley called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Bill Watson Conference Room located in the Municipal Building at 3800 University Boulevard.

5. Roll Call

Mayor Pro Tem Trautner and Councilmembers Barnes, Lankford, and Sobash attended via audio/videoconference.

Staff participants: City Manager Beach, City Secretary Gilliam, Public Works Director Barrera and Assistant to the City Manager Thompson were physically in attendance. Fire Chief Taylor and Finance Director DuBose attended remotely. City Attorney Petrov attended via video/teleconference.

Others attending remotely: John Robuck with Bok Financial Securities; Marcus Deitz with Orrick

6. Pledge of Allegiance

Councilmember Lankford led the Pledge.

7. Public Comments

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

There were no comments from the public.

8. Resolution Authorizing Publication of Notice of Intention to Issue City of West University Place, Texas Certificates of Obligation, Series 2020

Consideration and approval of a Resolution Authorizing Publication of Notice of Intention to Issue Certificates of Obligation, Series 2020, for the Design, Acquisition, Construction and Improvement of Certain Public Works, and Authorizing Certain Other Matters Relating Thereto. *Recommended Action: Approve the Resolution Authorizing Publication of Notice of Intention to Issue Certificates of Obligation, Series 2020, for the Design, Acquisition, Construction and Improvement of Certain Public Works, and Authorizing Certain Other Matters Relating Thereto. Mr. Katherine DuBose, Finance Director*

City Manager Beach presented to say that based on feedback from Council during workshops on city-wide streets and drainage improvements and discussions regarding Buffalo Speedway, Council's desire is to issue bonds prior to the November national election to take advantage of low historic interest rates.

City Manager Beach said Council has been provided with two options:

1. Buffalo Speedway Rehabilitation Project (\$20m)
2. Buffalo Speedway plus citywide street and drainage improvements (\$27m)

City Manager Beach said both options include an amount not to exceed \$100,000 to reimburse for property purchased in 2019 (3807 Rice Blvd) for future use with the Community Building and Senior Center.

Mr. Robuck said the City has an opportunity to issue debt at the lowest interest rates ever experienced. He suggested that the City issue the \$27million now to secure the low interest rates.

Mayor Pro Tem Trautner inquired about the 25-year term versus the 30-year term. He said his preference would be to go with the 30-year term because it matches up with the life of the project and due to the low interest rates.

Mr. Robuck said he is a firm believer in financing a project over the useful life of the project so that the people who are using it are the ones paying for it. He said impact to the average taxpayer would be approximately \$19.93 month.

Councilmember Sobash said he likes the 25-year option because it frees up funds on the backend for additional projects, but could he could go either way.

Councilmember Lankford said she likes issuing the \$27m as opposed to \$20m because she likes getting the drainage project going in the other areas of the City and taking advantage of the interest rates.

City Manager Beach said if there are no further questions staff recommends that City Council approve the Resolution authorizing publication of notice of intention to issue Certificates of Obligation, Series 2020, for the design, acquisition, construction and improvement of certain Public Works, and authorizing certain other matters relating thereto.

Councilmember Barnes moved to approve per staff's recommendation. Mayor Higley seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED.**

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

Audio of the entire presentation is on the website or you can contact the City Secretary for a copy of the oral and/or written presentation.

9. HomeSecure Concept Proposal

Matters related to a proposal to provide a service to assist seniors and potentially other residents in monitoring their properties during an extended period of absence. *Recommendation: Discuss and take any desired action.* **Councilmembers Lauri Lankford and John Barnes**

Councilmember Lankford presented and reviewed the purpose of the program, which would be to support aging in place and to aid residents in keeping watch on the outside of their properties in the event they are away from their homes for an extended period of time, particularly for medical issues.

Councilmember Lankford said at the June 22 meeting, Mayor Higley asked that she and Councilmember Barnes brainstorm on this issue, which resulted in the proposal before Council tonight. She said she believes the proposal gave the false impression at the July 13 meeting that Council was trying to workshop the issue and come up with a recommendation for a specific program at subsequent council meetings, which was not the case. She said the document sets out her and Councilmember Barnes' thoughts about what to consider if West U decides to implement a voluntary notification program for vacant homes. She said Councilmember Barnes had an additional idea to extend the notification program to other situations when houses may sit vacant.

Councilmember Lankford said a vote is only being requested on whether Council wants staff and/or the Senior Board to evaluate and consider implementing such a notification program in the coming year.

Mayor Pro Tem Trautner said he wanted to reiterate his concerns from the previous meetings. He said he feels like this really should be something that is handled privately and said, additionally, the City has codes that addresses vacant homes. He said staff has a lot going on and there is a particular burden on the City's one Code Enforcement Officer and said he doesn't think it is the government's role to handle this kind of private matter. Mayor Pro Tem Trautner suggested that residents consider a house sitter, neighbors, students, volunteers, etc.

Councilmember Sobash said while he supports aging in place he agrees with Mayor Pro Tem Trautner and echoed most of his views.

Councilmember Barnes spoke to point out that not everyone knows his/her neighbors and not everyone has the means to hire a house sitter. He said the City has a vested interest in making sure, without actually paying for the maintenance, that the homes in the neighborhood are maintained as best they can be. He said the current code enforcement doesn't allow for any type of inspection of the rear portion of properties and that's one of the things they are trying to address with the proposal because there could be damage happening to the rear of a property and no one would know about it.

Mayor Higley asked the City Manager if staff has time to do this. City Manager Beach said it will depend on the extent of the service but he can assign it to staff for review.

Councilmember Barnes said in terms of staff he and Councilmember Lankford's proposal includes whether the Code Enforcement Officer or someone else might be the appropriate individual performing the task. City Manager Beach said that is one of things staff would have to look into.

Mayor Pro Tem Trautner said he hates to see staff's time expended on this issue when he's opposed to the concept to begin with. He said it is pretty easy to find a house sitter or someone to check on your house. He said he worries it is a slippery slope into opening Pandora's Box in terms of an expensive service performed by the City.

Councilmember Barnes responded that the thing the proposal is trying to address is when a resident has to leave his or her home suddenly, like for medical reasons, and he or she may not have the opportunity to reach out to obtain volunteer services, house sitters or what have you. He said this is basically a program for a notification system that would be available to residents in advance.

Mayor Pro Tem Trautner said he thinks people need to get closer to their neighbors.

Councilmember Lankford said that doesn't solve the problem. She said she knows all her neighbors and they are all busy and are often away from their own homes.

In response to Mayor Higley's question as to what staff would be involved, City Manager Beach said there would probably be multiple departments involved because there are a lot of moving parts that go into this, especially with access to private property being given to the public.

Councilmember Sobash said he appreciates the good-hearted nature of the service but doesn't believe it is a service the City should provide.

Mayor Higley said he thinks it is the function of staff to review this and either put a spike in it or give it a green light.

Councilmember Lankford moved to direct staff to evaluate and consider implementing this notification program to aid residents in keeping watch on their homes while their vacant. Councilmember Barnes seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED.**

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

10. Information and Updates related to 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:

- Over the last nine days there has been a spike in the statewide positivity rate, which is currently at 20.99 – the highest during the entire pandemic.
- Regional positivity rate has continually decline.
- As of August 10, the Texas Medical Center is hovering around 100 percent of Phase I occupancies.
- West U has added 4 new cases so there are now 38 confirmed cases – 9 active, 29 recovered, and 0 deaths.

- City staff is compiling all of the COVID-related expenses in order to apply for FEMA public assistance reimbursement.
- City staff is working with the county to identify some potential expenses for reimbursement through the Coronavirus Relief Fund for small cities.

11. Possible Appointments to the Building and Standards Commission

Matters related to the possible appointment of a regular member and/or alternate to the Building and Standards Commission. ***Discuss and take any desired action. City Council***

Based on discussion held in the workshop session, Councilmember Sobash moved to nominate Gerry Spedale from being an alternate member to being a regular member. Mayor Pro Tem Trautner seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED.**

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

Councilmember Lankford moved to approve appointing Grayson Bush as an alternate. Councilmember Barnes seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED.**

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

12. 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 the City Council Workshop Minutes of July 20, 2020 and the City Council Meeting Minutes of July 27, 2020.

B. Intent to Reimburse Expenditures from Proceeds of Tax-Exempt Obligations

Matters related to a resolution declaring official intent to reimburse expenditures from proceeds of tax-exempt obligations. *Recommended Action: Approve resolution declaring official intent to reimburse expenditures from proceeds of tax-exempt obligations. Ms. Katherine DuBose, Finance Director*

Councilmember Sobash moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Mayor Pro Tem Trautner seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED.**

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

13. Adjourn Regular Meeting

With no other matter before the council, the meeting will adjourn.

Councilmember Sobash moved to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:29 p.m. Councilmember Barnes seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED.**

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

Audio of the Council Meeting is available in its entirety on the City's website or contact the City Secretary's office.

Prepared by: City Secretary Thelma A. Gilliam

Approved by City Council on: August 24, 2020