

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

On the 13th day of September, 2022, the City Council of Taft, Texas, convened in a regular meeting at 402 Park Street, at the Kiva Hut at 6:30 p.m. with the following members present:

Randy Powell	Mayor
Rolando Rodriguez	Mayor Pro-Tem
Lolo Hernandez	
Jo Adrian Vara	Absent
Leonard Vasquez	

Others Present: Sid Arismendez, Interim City Manager; Molly Topper, City Secretary; Jennifer Pineda; Michael Vasquez, Asst. Fire Chief; Amanda Powell; Roselia Searcy; Glenn Searcy; Denise Hitt; Anthony Hernandez; James Dermody; Raquel Ruvo; Samantha Martinez; Al & Judy Molina; Summer Garcia; Silvia Rodriguez; Manuela Moreno

1. CALL TO ORDER AND QUORUM CHECK

There being a quorum, the meeting was called to order by Mayor Powell at 6:34 p.m.

2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Councilman Hernandez led the invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

3. VISITORS

Glenn Searcy addressed the Council in regards to his concern of flares visible over the EXXON plant in Gregory and the lack of public notification. Mayor Powell suggested a scheduled meeting with representatives of the Plant to discuss. Councilman Rodriguez suggested the need for air monitors in and around the City of Taft.

No other visitors addressed the Council.

4. DISCUSS, CONSIDER AND ACT TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 9, 2022, SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES AND THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES.

Mayor Powell requested a change in the motion made in Item 14. That Councilman Vara be removed as making the second, he was not present at the meeting. Councilman Hernandez motioned, seconded by Councilman Rodriguez, to approve the special and regular meeting minutes of August 9, 2022, with the noted change.

The following votes were polled:

Ayes: Vasquez, Rodriguez, Hernandez, Powell

Noes: None

Absent: Vara

The motion carried.

5. CONSIDER, DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION TO AUTHORIZE THE CITY MANAGER TO RATIFY THE AGREEMENT WITH ARMSTRONG, VAUGHAN & ASSOCIATES, P.C FOR CITY'S FINANCIAL AUDIT FOR 2022-2023.

Mr. Arismendez announced that the former administrator had entered into agreement for the next year's audit, but had received concern regarding her authority to enter agreement without Council approval. This agenda item was just to ratify the agreement.

Councilman Rodriguez motioned, seconded by Councilman Hernandez, to authorize the City Manager to ratify the agreement for FY 2022-2023 Financial Audit.

The following votes were polled:

Ayes: Vasquez, Rodriguez, Hernandez, Powell

Noes: None

Absent: Vara

The motion carried.

6. CONSIDER, DISCUSS AND ACT ON CELEBRATING HALLOWEEN ON GREEN, THE CLOSURE OF GREEN AVE TO ACCOMMODATE THE EVENT AND THE CITY'S INVOLVEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE PROGRAM

Councilman Vasquez motioned, seconded by Councilman Hernandez to hold Halloween on Green on October 29, 2022, from 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm and to close necessary streets.

The following votes were polled:

Ayes: Vasquez, Rodriguez, Hernandez, Powell

Noes: None

Absent: Vara

The motion carried.

7. DISCUSSION OF STREET LIGHTS ON DAVIS ROAD

Councilman Rodriguez requested an update of the street lights on Davis Road that identified the lights needing replacement bulbs. Mayor Powell commented that one light was burning a bright blue and instructed Public Works Director, Bernie Saenz for an updated report at the next meeting.

There was no motion and not votes polled.

The following votes were polled:

8. CONSIDER, DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON WHETHER TO APPROVE A VARIANCE REQUEST WHICH, IF APPROVED, WOULD ALLOW THE PLACEMENT OF A MANUFACTURED HOME OUTSIDE OF DESIGNATED ZONES OR A MOBILE HOME PARK AND BE PLACED AT 146 HIDALGO WITH THE LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF HIDALGO SECOND BLK 7, LOT 11, 0.118 ACRES, TAFT, TEXAS.

Mr. Arismendez informed Council that the request had been made by Debra Garcia at a public hearing before the Planning & Zoning Commission and they unanimously voted to recommend their approval of the variance to the City Council.

Councilman Hernandez motioned, seconded by Mayor Powell, to approve the variance request for the placement of a manufactured house outside of designated zones or a mobile home park and be placed at 146 Hidalgo with the legal description of Hidalgo Second, Blk 7, Lot 11, 0.118 acres, Taft, Texas.

The following votes were polled:

Ayes: Vasquez, Rodriguez, Hernandez, Powell

Noes: None
Absent: Vara
The motion carried.

9. CONSIDER, DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON DESIGNATING BERNIE SAENZ CHIEF PUBLIC INFORMATION COORDINATOR FOR THE CITY OF TAFT

Mr. Arismendez advised Council that Mr. Saenz had many years experience in this role. Councilman Vasquez question Mr. Saenz if he had time to fill this role in addition to his performance as Director of Public Works. Mr. Saenz advised his had 5 ½ years experience in his prior employment and that he had other duties as well.

Councilman Rodriguez motioned, seconded by Councilman Hernandez, to appoint Bernie Saenz the Chief Public Information Coordinator for the City of Taft.

The following votes were polled:

Ayes: Rodriguez, Hernandez, Powell
Noes: Vasquez
Absent: Vara
The motion carried.

10. CONSIDER, DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON APPROVING TRANSMISSION RIGHT-OF-WAY EASEMENT OPTION, EASEMENT AGREEMENT AND GRANT OF EASEMENT WITH PEACOCK ENERGY PROJECT, LLC.

Mr. Arismendez informed Council of the proposed 50' right-of-way easement along State Hwy 631, being approximately 1 mile. Raquel Ruvo, a visitor, asked representatives of Peacock Energy if the city government would be supported in any special projects, or contributions within the community, to which they replied yes. Mayor Powell commented that he believed the solar panels would be too close to the city limits, affecting the ETJ.

Councilman Rodriguez motioned, seconded by Councilman Hernandez, to approve the transmission right of way easement option, easement agreement, and grant of easement with Peacock Energy Project, LLC.

The following votes were polled:

Ayes: Vasquez, Rodriguez, Hernandez
Noes: Powell
Absent: None
The motion carried.

11. CONSIDER, DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON CONCERNS FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS ABOUT RECENT EMISSIONS FROM EXXON PLANT

Mayor Powell reported that based on concerns from Glenn Searcy the request that this item be placed on the agenda for discussion by Councilman Hernandez, he had reached out to representatives of the Exxon Plant and asked that they approach Council with an explanation and information regarding the emissions. Councilman Rodriguez proposed that Exxon place air monitors throughout the City for monitoring by the City. Mayor Powell asked that City staff contact TCEQ and EPA regarding these emissions.

There was no action taken, item was tabled for a future meeting.

12. CONSIDER, DISCUSS AND ACT TO APPOINT TWO MEMBERS TO THE TQIC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr. Arismendez informed Council that there are two vacant seats. Council took no action, this item was tabled for a future meeting.

13. CONSIDER, DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION TO APPOINT 1 MEMBER TO THE PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

Mr. Arismendez informed Council of the vacant seat. Council took no action and tabled the item to a future meeting.

14. AT THIS TIME, COUNCIL CLOSED THE OPEN SESSION AND MOVED INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION: 7:15 P.M.

15. DISCUSS, CONSIDER AND ACT ON MATTERS DISCUSSED IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. Pursuant to section 551.074: personnel matters involving the appointment, employment, evaluation or duties of a public officer or employee, to wit: City Secretary/Court Clerk.

2. Pursuant to Section 551.087, Section 551.072 and Section 551.073 regarding deliberation of economic development negotiations and real estate transaction.

3. Consultation with City Attorney regarding contractual consulting services provided by Santos McBain.

4. Pursuant to Section 551.071, contemplated or pending litigation where legal advise is requested by City Attorney.

AT THIS TIME, COUNCIL CLOSED THE EXECUTIVE SESSION AND RETURNED TO OPEN SESION: AT 8:04 P.M.

Council took the following action following the executive session discussion:

1: No action

2. Councilman Rodriguez motioned, seconded by Councilman Hernandez, to proceed with the instruction of the City Council in regards to negotiations of real estate transaction and appoint the Interim City Manager Sid Arismendez to act on behalf of the City.

Ayes: Rodriguez, Hernandez, Powell

Noes: None

Abstain: Vasquez

Absent: Vara

The motion carried.

3. Mayor Powell motioned to instruct the City Attorney to review the consulting services contract with Santos McBain, seconded by Councilman Hernandez.

Ayes: Vasquez Hernandez, Powell

Noes: Rodriguez

Absent: Vara

The motion carried.

4. No action.

16. CITY COUNCIL REQUESTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Councilman Vasquez: lighting in the park

Councilman Rodriguez: salaries of management and lighting in the park

Councilman Hernandez: animal control shelter update and update on building on HWY 181 & DeVillbiss

Mayor Powell: modification of Ordinance 673, restricted requirements; budget considerations for Blackland Museum; the animal shelter; water tower repainting

4. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business Councilman Vasquez motioned, seconded by Councilman Hernandez, to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

The following votes were polled:

Ayes: Vasquez, Rodriguez, Hernandez

Noes: None

Absent: Powell

The motion carried.

CITY OF TAFT

Randy Powell

Mayor

ATTEST:

Molly Topper

City Secretary