

City Council
January 25, 2023

A Work Session of the Mayor and City Council of the City of Waxahachie, Texas was held at the Waxahachie Civic Center, Crape Myrtle Room, 2000 Civic Center Lane, Waxahachie, Texas, on Wednesday, January 25, 2023 at 8:30 a.m.

Council Members Present: David Hill, Mayor, Council Member Place 1
Chris Wright, Mayor Pro Tem, Council Member Place 3
Patrick Souter, Council Member Place 2
Billie Wallace, Council Member Place 4
Travis Smith, Council Member Place 5

Others Present: Michael Scott, City Manager
Albert Lawrence, Deputy City Manager
Robert Brown, City Attorney
Amber Villarreal, City Secretary

1. Call to Order

Mayor David Hill called the meeting to order. City Manager Michael Scott explained the Work Session will allow staff to provide project updates to City Council and some topics are seeking direction from City Council.

2. Discuss Farley Street Concept Design

James Gaertner, Executive Director of Public Works and Utilities, presented options for widening Farley Street, between Highway 287 Frontage Road and Richmond Lane. He reviewed potential costs, right-of-way needs, layout, and two options for detour during construction.

Council Member Patrick Souter requested incorporating penalties/fines in the contract if the project timeline is not met by the contractor, especially if the public is inconvenienced by the construction. Mr. Scott explained incentives can also be included in the contract if the project is completed sooner than agreed.

It was the general consensus of City Council for staff to proceed with the design concept keeping the alignment of Farley Street to save on costs and reduce construction time.

3. Discuss interest in pursuing Package Liquor election

City Attorney Robert Brown reviewed the process of requesting a package liquor election. He explained the State of Texas legislates the process of a citizen or group applying for a local option election through the petition process. He stated if the applicant submits the required documents and petition, verified by the City Secretary, the City Council has to call an election at the next uniform election date.

Mr. Scott confirmed the election would be at the expense of the City.

4. Discuss City's Water and Wastewater CCN

Mr. Scott explained the City has received 9-10 petitions for Municipal Utility Districts for properties outside of the city limits. He explained releasing or decertifying the Certificate of Convenience and Necessity (CCN) areas will allow adequate services for those developments in the City limits.

Mr. Gaertner explained designating CCN areas gives the City a claim to serve an area; however, the City can still serve an area that does not have a CCN. He explained the City's goal would be for developers to discuss opportunities for the City to serve their developments.

It was the general consensus of City Council for staff to present a list of areas in the city's ETJ to decertify.

5. Discuss Downtown Grant/Loan program and related property rehab efforts

Anita Simpson, Director of Downtown Development, explained the Waxahachie Partnership, Inc. (WPI) approved a Downtown Building Improvement Program for the Historic Overlay District for properties within the Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone No. 1 (TIRZ) area. She explained the grant would require a 50/50 match from the requestor, up to \$30,000, for internal and external improvements to downtown properties. She noted the approved grants would be funded by TIRZ.

Mayor Pro Tem Chris Wright confirmed the TIRZ area collects tax monies from properties in the TIRZ area and those funds can only be used for improvements to the TIRZ area.

It was the general consensus of City Council to support the Downtown Grant Program and increase the matching funds up to \$50,000. Council agreed the grant program would assist in preservation of historic downtown and directed staff to present to TIRZ for approval.

6. Discuss Briefing Sessions

Amy Borders, Director of Communications and Marketing, reviewed options, challenges, and additional costs for streaming Planning and Zoning (P&Z) and City Council briefings.

It was the general consensus of City Council to no longer have briefings prior to P&Z and City Council meetings in an effort to have the items discussed during the live streamed public meeting, effective immediately. P&Z and City Council meetings will continue to begin at 7:00 p.m.

7. Discuss property tax exemptions

Mr. Scott explained City Council requested options for providing monetary relief to taxpayers and staff is seeking direction from Council on how to proceed.

Chad Tustison, Senior Director of Finance, reviewed the home appraisal process and the following current tax exemptions: Over 65, Disabled Person, Tax Ceiling, Historical, and Disabled Veteran. Mr. Tustison also explained the Tax Code allows a local optional homestead exemption, percentage up to a maximum of 20% of appraised value (minimum of \$5,000), which must be

approved by City Council no later than June 30th. He reported there are approximately 8,524 residential homestead properties within Waxahachie and those properties with current exemptions may not see additional relief from a local optional homestead. Mr. Tustison stated once a local optional homestead is adopted by City Council, the percentage can increase but never decrease. He explained with a 1% exemption, a property valued at \$250,000 would see an estimated \$31 tax reduction and a property valued at \$550,000 would see an estimated \$35 tax reduction.

Council Members discussed options for offering rebates to tax payers and the possible affects of upcoming legislation changes.

It was the general consensus of City Council to consider a 1% local optional homestead exemption at a future Council meeting and continue discussion for tax relief/rebate options for 2022 tax payers at a future Work Session.

8. Discuss update of City development fees (including Building, Planning and Inspection, and Engineering Fees)

Shon Brooks, Executive Director of Development Services, reviewed the residential fee comparison with other cities in the area and reported the City of Waxahachie residential fee schedule for Planning was updated in 2015 and the residential fee schedule for Building was updated in 2016.

It was the general consensus of City Council for staff to present an updated residential fee schedule at a future Council meeting.

9. Discuss Lake Park improvements

Gumaro Martinez, Executive Director of Parks and Leisure Services, reviewed the current state of the parks at Lake Waxahachie and presented renderings of improvements from the Lake Parks Master Plan. Mr. Martinez noted the construction plans are 95% completed and will be ready to bid soon. In reviewing the financials, the Opinion of Probable Cost estimates a base bid of \$4,082,127.41 and \$1,133,923.00 for bid alternates for a total cost of \$5,216,050.41. He reminded Council that \$3.4 million is available in previously approved bond funds. Mr. Scott explained the Waxahachie Community Development Corporation (WCDC) may be able to assist with some additional funding.

Mayor Pro Tem Wright noted he supports funding broader park improvements that serve the general public and not funding improvements at the Lake that is only beneficial to a limited number of people.

Mr. Martinez explained the base bid is a priority for safety improvements at the lake.

It was the general consensus of City Council to support Lake Park safety improvements and direct staff to proceed with bidding to review actual costs.

10. Discuss interest and potential locations for Pickleball Courts

Kyle Cooper, Director of Parks and Recreation, reviewed possible locations to add Pickleball Courts in Waxahachie for free use by the public. He estimated between \$633,000-\$658,000 to build a pickleball court, including windscreens, lighting, parking, and Geotech testing.

Council Member Travis Smith noted he is not supportive of using tax dollars for pickleball courts.

Mr. Cooper presented an option to resurface unused tennis courts at the Salvation Army for an estimated \$37,000-\$46,000 (single court regulation size) or \$82,000-\$91,000 (3-4 courts non-regulation size). He explained the Salvation Army is supportive of this effort and interested in a Shared Use Agreement with the City.

It was the general consensus of City Council to present the request to the Park Board for consideration before City Council considers funding.

11. Discuss Quiet Zones

Mr. Gaertner reviewed the Federal Railroad Administration Train Horn Rule and noted there are 27 railroad crossings identified in Waxahachie. Mr. Gaertner reviewed the Quiet Zone Regulations identifying the following minimum requirements for quiet zones: lights and gates, power out indicator, constant warning circuitry, advance warning signs, reduce risk at each crossing, and supplementary safety measures such as median barrier, quadrant gate, conversion from two-way to one-way traffic, crossing closure or a wayside horn if other measures are not feasible. From the estimated cost in the 2007 Quiet Zone Report, Mr. Gaertner provided a 2022 cost estimate of \$9,200,200 based on construction inflation index. If City Council chooses to proceed, Mr. Gaertner recommended hiring a consultant for ensuring correct processing and coordination with Railroad Agencies.

It was the general consensus of City Council to delay the implementation of quiet zones due to cost.

12. Discuss expansion of the Central Area Zoning District

Mr. Scott reviewed Central Area Zoning District and the Historic Overlay District. He explained the City Council can adopt an ordinance expanding the Historic Overlay District to allow alcoholic beverages for public consumption during festivals/events.

Mr. Brooks cautioned the expansion of the Central Area Zoning District due to parking issues and overflow into neighborhoods.

It was the general consensus of City Council to consider expanding the Historic Overlay District at a future meeting.

13. Discuss redevelopment project updates

Warren Kettelman, Senior Director of Economic Development, provided an update on the following projects:

- Downtown vacant lots: Mr. Brad Yates is working to resolve Oncor issue in the alley
- Old Police Department: cleanup and restoration of the building is progressing
- Former Baylor Hospital site: staff and committee are continuously exploring options and proposals
- W. 287 site: coordinating with Navarro College on their expansion plan to provide a nice corridor view with any future development on the City site

14. Discuss Compensation Study update

Lindsey Mearns, Senior Director of Human Resources, updated City Council on the process for the compensation study. She explained McGrath Consulting has met with each department head to better understand the department's organization and opinions of the current compensation and benefits package. She explained all positions will complete "position questionnaires" to better understand the positions beyond the job description. The consultant will begin collecting information from a list of 25 comparable cities identified by Human Resources, department heads, and the consultant. McGrath estimates to have the final report presented to City Council in May and then Council can explore options on implementation.

15. Discuss potential of expanding seats and terms for City Council

Mr. Scott reported he received a request to discuss the expansion of City Council to seven members, increase Council Member terms to three years, and remove runoffs. He explained a Charter Election would be required and the propositions would be presented to voters for approval.

It was the general consensus of City Council to further discuss a November Charter Election at a future Work Session.

16. Discuss naming of city/state facilities

Mr. Scott reported he received a request from Dr. Jamal Rasheed requesting to name Highway 287, between Midlothian and Ennis, as "Bessie Coleman Memorial Freeway" and he received a request from the NAACP to name an office at the Charles Beatty Municipal Services Building after fallen police officer Josh Williams. Mr. Scott noted he emailed the NAACP explaining the office at the new building will only be one room and would not adequately honor Josh Williams. Mr. Scott explained Bessie Coleman is recognized at three locations in Waxahachie: Mid-Way Regional Airport (plaque), Freedman's Memorial Park (plaque), and Bessie Coleman Street is near a high traffic shopping center off of Highway 77.

The Council discussed ways to honor fallen police officers and firefighters.

Council Member Wallace asked the Council to consider renaming the FM 878 overpass off Hwy 287 in Ms. Coleman's honor. She noted the bridge is near where Ms. Coleman lived during the time she was in Waxahachie.

It was the general consensus of City Council to not rename Highway 287 as "Bessie Coleman Memorial Freeway." City Council directed Mr. Scott to contact Dr. Rasheed and convey Council Member Wallace's suggestion to rename the FM 878 overpass off Hwy 287 in Ms. Coleman's honor.

17. Discuss events and use of City resources by out-of-City applicants

Mr. Scott explained there has been an increase requesting City services such as staffing, barricades, street closures, etc., to assist with non-city events and asked if Council has interest in adopting a fee schedule for residents vs. non-residents.

Council Member Smith noted if events are not directly generating revenue for the City, then it is hard to justify providing them City services that are funded by tax dollars.

It was the general consensus of City Council to review a proposed fee schedule for events and allow staff discretion on waiving fees for events that offer a significant economic impact to Waxahachie.

18. Adjourn

Mayor Hill thanked staff, City Management, and City Council for their participation.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amber Villarreal
City Secretary