

THE CITY OF EASTLAND
CITY COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

August 19, 2024

EASTLAND, TEXAS §

EASTLAND, COUNTY §

The City Commission of the City of Eastland, Texas, met in Open Session at Eastland City Hall as scheduled, and notice was posted 72 hours in advance and prior to the meeting.

CITY COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Chairman	Larry Vernon
Commissioner	Richard Rossander
Commissioner	Shirley Stuart
Commissioner	Carol Jones
Commissioner	James Doyle

PERSONNEL PRESENT:

City Manager	J.J. Oznick
Finance Director	Leslie Zander
City Secretary	Roma Holley
Police Chief	Tim Pitts
Fire Chief	Joe Williamson
Planning Director	Tony Stubblefield
Code Enforcement	Terry Simmons

Guests: Julie Elrod, Juli Cameron, Thom Cameron, Vance O'Brien, Stephanie Alexander, Paul Roby, Tim Carter

I. Meeting Called to Order

Chairman Larry Vernon called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance and the Texas Pledge

Chairman Larry Vernon offered the invocation and City Manager J.J. Oznick led the Pledge of Allegiance and the Texas Pledge.

III. Public Comment on any Subject Not listed on this Agenda (Limited to Five Minutes Per Speaker)

Stephanie Alexander spoke to the commission regarding her concern about city taxes and tax valuations.

IV. Approve Minutes of the July 15, 2024 and July 22, 2024, July 29, 2024, August 5, 2024 and August 16, 2024 Meetings

Commissioner Shirly Stuart made a motion, seconded by Commissioner James Doyle, to approve the minutes of the July 15, 2024 and July 22, 2024, July 29, 2024, August 5, 2024 and August 16, 2024 Meetings

Ayes: Commissioners Doyle, Jones, Rossander, Stuart
Nays: None
Absent: None

V. Financial Report

City Manager stated regarding sales tax that it has flattened out a little bit but we are still in good shape.

VI. Eastland Economic Development Inc. Bi-Annual Report – Tom Bailey

This report has been rescheduled for September 19, 2024.

VII. The Board of City Commissioners May Discuss and Take Action on the Following Agenda Items:

1. Discussion and Consideration of Briona Sattarphai to present the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 contract request Eastland County Crisis Center, Inc.

City Manager J.J. Oznick stated that Mrs. Sattarphai was unable to attend tonight. He stated that this contract is for the same amount as last year, and that staff supports this organization in every way possible. The contract of the Eastland County Crime Victim Assistance Center is \$8,520, payable in 12 monthly installments of \$710 each month. The contract of the Eastland County Children’s Advocacy Center is \$20,520, payable in 12 monthly installments of \$1710.00

Commissioner Shirley Stuart made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Richard Rossander, to approve the contract renewal of the Eastland County Crisis Center, doing business as the Eastland County Crime Victims Assistance Center and the Eastland County Children’s Advocacy Center for the same amount as last year.

Ayes: Commissioners Doyle, Jones, Rossander, Stuart
 Nays: None
 Absent: None

2. Discussion and Consideration of Resolution 2024-11 A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF EASTLAND, TEXAS, APPROVING A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT BETWEEN THE ATMOS CITIES STEERING COMMITTEE (“ACSC”) AND ATMOS ENERGY CORP, MID-TEX DIVISION REGARDING THE COMPANY’S 2024 RATE REVIEW MECHANISM FILING.

City Manager Oznick stated we pay this Steering Committee to be our “voice” among the Regulatory Commission. This is the Resolution that is made each year that keeps us participating with the Steering Committee.

Commissioner Richard Rossander made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shirley Stuart, to continue participation with the Atmos Cities Steering Committee.

Ayes: Commissioners Jones, Rossander, Stuart
 Nays: None
 Absent: None
 Abstain: Commissioner Doyle

3. Discussion and Consideration of adoption of Resolution 2024-12, Directing Publication of Notice of Intention to Issue Combination Tax and Revenue Certificates of Obligation to Provide Funds for Water System Improvements; and Resolving other Matters Relating to the Subject.”

Chairman Vernon tabled this discussion until the regular meeting in September.

4. Discussion and Consideration of updating Drought Contingency Plan

City Manager Oznick stated this Plan is required to be updated every five years and sent in to the State. We had started to update it in November 2023 but never approved the updates.

City Manager Oznick advised the Commissioners that currently, we enacted Stage 2 of the Drought Contingency Plan on August 25, 2023. Since that time, we have been tracking the top 100 customers who use the most water. Some of these customers are using it correctly, according to our regulations, and some are using it incorrectly. We have begun contacting these citizens to make sure they understand what is happening and why we need to use the water within the guidelines. We have also been checking for leaks and ascertaining whether the water meters are working properly.

We are approaching Stage 3 in the Drought Contingency Plan and we are trying to make all of our citizens aware of what will happen if we do get to that point. The fines and penalties that will be applied to the improper use of the water will be greatly enhanced. We want to avoid this and are making every effort to educate our citizens to conserve water and use it within the guidelines set out in the Drought Contingency Plan.

In Stage 3 there will be a surcharge on customers who use over a certain amount of water. A surcharge of \$11 per 1,000 gallons of water used will be assessed for residential usage within the city limits of Eastland between 2,000 and 8,000 gallons per month.

A surcharge of \$21 per 1,000 gallons of water used will be assessed for usage within the city limits of Eastland over 8,000 gallons per month.

Our metering system sends a report every hour that identifies how much water is being run through the meter. This allows us to monitor how much water is being used and at what time and who is using it.

We are keeping a watchful eye on the customers who have been identified as needing encouragement to correct their over usage. They have been notified via U.S. Mail and we have helped several identify problems.

Chairman Larry Vernon stated that we are headed for Stage 3 pretty quickly unless we get some rain. We need to be aware that some customers water bills are going to really be affected because of the surcharges. We need to be prepared to answer the questions as to why and what is happening.

He stated that many years ago, the City of Eastland requested customers water their lawns only 3 days a week. We are trying to be proactive by contacting customers who use more than 20,000 gallons a month and telling them what the consequences are and will be of using their water incorrectly. This is not meant to be punitive in nature but we are asking people to be responsible water users and take our water conservation very seriously. Please comply with the rules we are putting in place.

Chairman Vernon stated he would like to see updated times when watering is allowed. He suggested to leave the days of the week alone but change the hours. The days for addresses that end in an odd number are Thursday and Sunday. The days for addresses that end in an even number are Wednesday and Saturday. Instead of watering for 2 hours from 7 am to 9

am and then 2 hours from 7 pm to 9 pm, he would like to change the hours to 4 hours between the time of 7 pm to 9 am. This is basically the same except that it will allow residents to water for 4 hours at a time, instead of breaking it up. That means NO WATERING AT ALL FROM 9 AM TO 7 PM.

Commissioner Richard Rossander made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shirley Stuart, to approve updating the Drought Contingency Plan by changing the times of allowed watering to 4 hours between the times of 7 pm to 9 am on the assigned days.

Ayes: Commissioners Doyle, Jones, Rossander, Stuart
Nays: None
Absent: None

5. Discussion and Consideration of Budget Workshop #2 approving Tax Rate and Take Record Vote

Finance Director Leslie Zander stated that she had made the adjustments to the budget as was requested during Budget Workshop #1. This includes a 3% across the board raises for our employees. Our TMRS rate has gone down for this year which will save us a little bit of money.

She mentioned that there have been questions regarding the Age 65 Tax Freeze. She stated she called the Eastland County Appraisal District and received the following explanation: whatever your taxes are during the year that you turn 65, and you apply for this freeze, the amount of taxes will not change after that. Even if the value of your house increases, your taxes will stay the same.

After several minutes of discussion regarding the voter approved tax rate and the no new revenue rate, Commissioner James Doyle made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Richard Rossander, to approve the proposed 2024-2025 Budget, which contains a tax rate of .491515 per \$100 of property valuation. Chairman Vernon requested a record vote from each Commissioner.

Commissioner Rossander: For
Commissioner Doyle: For
Commissioner Stuart: For
Commissioner Jones: For
Commissioner Vernon: For

VIII. City Manager Report

GLO-CDBG-MIT Project Planning

The bids for the streets have been approved and the contracts are under review at this time. The bid packet for the south fork of the Leon River clearing is being completed.

TWDB Flood infrastructure Fund Grant

Final report has been approved by the TWDB.

Downtown Sidewalk Repairs

Unknown timeframe.

TXDOT Exit 343 Ramp and Signal Light Projects

Construction complete and the lights are on.

DAM REPAIRS

Engineers from EH&T and HDR are beginning to work through different designs for Eastland Lake and Ringling Lake dams.

IX. Code Compliance Report

Planning and Zoning Director Tony Stubblefield reported the Code Compliance Report for July 2024. There were 68 open cases at the beginning of the month, 29 new cases were opened and 35 case were closed, which ended the month with 62 cases open. Two citations were issued: one for tall weeds and the other for Off street parking, Parking in front or exterior side yar, Recreational vehicle use.

X. Police Chief Report

Chief Tim Pitts stated there were 369 calls for service in July. 7 cases were filed with the District Attorney and 3 cases filed with the Juvenile Authorities. There were 55 offense reports generated. He noted 18 arrests. A total of 452 traffic stops were initiated. This resulted in 289 warning citations and 163 citations issued. He also stated that 619 “business checks” were conducted. Our Animal Control Officer had a very active month with 81 business calls. 17 animals were impounded and 3 was adopted and 1 were quarantined. 6 citations and 4 warnings were issued by the Animal Control Officer.

Chief Pitts noted there were 6 Narcotics Arrests; 8 arrest warrants served; Recovered 2 Stolen Vehicles; 1 Vehicle Pursuit

Officer Alex Rodriguez - Graduated the Police Academy and is on the Field Training Program- Assigned to Sgt. Allman.

Officer Auston Rose has completed the Field Training Program and is out on his own and doing great work.

K9 - unit is up and running and doing great work - Officer Zachary Spruill and his K9 Buck.

We have 2 officers (Allman and McDade) assigned to attend Alerrt -Train the Trainer class. (Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training) They will be instructors in Active Shooter Response. This allows us to conduct training here in Eastland for other agencies and we do not have to send our officers away to train.

XI. Fire Chief Report

Fire Chief Joe Williamson gave the following activity report for the month of July 2024 for the Volunteer and Paid Firefighters. Total call volume: 82 which was an average of 2.6 calls per day. 60 of these were in the City Limits and 21 of them were in the county and they responded to 1 call for mutual aid to other county fire departments. There were 10 incidents between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. There were 2 structure fires, 4 grass fires and 2 vehicle fires. They responded to 52 Medical calls, 4 Motor Vehicle accidents and 6 Public Service assists and 1 false alarm/investigation. We had one rescue and one Haz-Mat issue. Our volunteer membership remains at 25.

XII. Discussion and Consideration of Applicants for the Position of City Manager.

Executive Session in Accordance with Local Government Code §551.074 – Personnel Matters

Commence: 7:08 p.m.
Conclude: 8:50 p.m.

XIII. Discussion and Consideration of any action to be taken as a result of the Executive Session.

Commissioner Richard Rossander made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Carol Jones to hire Savannah Fortenberry as City Manager.

Ayes: Commissioners Doyle, Jones, Rossander
Nays: Stuart
Absent: None

XIV. Adjournment

Commissioner James Doyle made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Shirley Stuart, to adjourn at 8:52 p.m.

APPROVED

Larry Vernon, Chairman
Board of City Commissioners

ATTEST

Roma Holley, City Secretary