

State of Texas

County of Brazoria

City of Freeport

BE IT REMEMBERED, that the City Council of Freeport, Texas met on Monday, July 20, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. at the Freeport Police Department, Municipal Court Room, 430 North Brazosport Boulevard, Freeport Texas for the purpose of considering the following agenda items:

City Council: Mayor Brooks Bass
Councilman Jerry Cain
Councilman Ken Green
Councilwoman Sandra Loeza
Councilman Roy E. Yates

Staff: Tim Kelty, City Manager
Stephanie Russell, Assistant City Manager
Betty Wells, City Secretary
Laura Tolar, Assistant City Secretary/ Special Projects Coordinator
Chris Duncan, City Attorney
Brenda Miller-Ferguson, Human Resource Director Via teleconference
LeAnn Strahan, Freeport Destination Director Via teleconference
Chris Motley, Freeport Fire Chief
Nat Hickey, Freeport Property Management
Billy Shoemaker, Director for Building and Code
Lance Petty, Freeport Public Works Director
Clarisa Molina, Administrator Assistant Via teleconference

Visitors: Melanie Oldham Ruben Renobato
Manning Rollerson Keith Stumbaugh
James Hinkle Ron Shields

Visitors, Via Teleconference: Wallace Tilley Vander Williams
Jesse Parker

Call to order.

Mayor Brooks Bass called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Invocation and the Pledge was led by Mayor Brooks Bass.

Citizen's Comments

Melanie Oldham spoke to council on behalf of the Concerned Citizens of Freeport. She said that the CCF wants to commend council for the positive changes to move the City forward. She said that Freeport must remain vigilant to not repeat the questionable agreements of the past. Ms. Oldham said that the city needs to make sure that all decisions are transparent. She also said that the city needs to use local builders on the new homes that will be built in Freeport. Melanie Oldham said that the church on the East Side, will be going to court on July 27 she said that Port Freeport filed Eminent Domain.

Mayor Bass thanked Manning Rollerson for removing a trailer.

Manning Rollerson said that his daughter is being moved into another apartment. He also said that he brought a Motion to Dismiss with the Port of Freeport. He said that he also has one from the Army Corp of Engineers.

PRESENTATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS: Announcements by Mayor, City Council and/or Staff

Emergency management briefing COVID-19.

Freeport Fire Chief Chris Motley said that the COVID-19 numbers have increased over the last few weeks. He said that Sectrac is still working well. He said that supplies are good. Chief Motley said that the Fire/EMS has had three employees affected by the COVID-19, as well as the Freeport PD, with five active cases in this department. He said that once the FIRE/EMS hears of a case in one of the City offices, they will come in with a fogging cleaner to decontaminate each building. Mayor Bass said that there were seven active cases when the order first came from the Governor. Now today Freeport has 150 active cases. Mayor Bass asked if the PD received PPE from the Fire/EMS, and Chief Motley said yes. Chief Motley said that there will be COVID-19 testing this Friday at the Freeport Municipal Park, and there is no cost for this testing. Chief Motley reminded everyone to wash your hands, practice social distancing, avoid large groups, use sanitizer. He said also, check on your friends.

REGULAR SESSION

Consideration and possible action on the approval of City Council meeting minutes from July 6, 2020.

On a motion by Councilwoman Loeza seconded by Councilman Yates, with all present voting "Aye" 5-0 Council unanimously approved City Council meeting minutes from July 6, 2020.

Discussions and direction from Council on the 2020/2021 Tax Rate.

Assistant City Manager Stephanie Russell presented to council the 2020/2021 Tax Rate for discussion and direction from Council. Ms. Russell said over the last few years Council has just adopted the same rate, and this will not be an option this year. She said that staff recommends reducing the property tax rate for the FY2020-2021 budget.

City Manager Tim Kelty said that there are capital projects that we are trying to fund. He said that it is important to set the tax rate, so that it supports the budget.

Mayor Brooks Bass asked if reducing the rate to the recommended No New Revenue Rate plus three percent would keep us from being able to go out for Certificate of Obligation Bonds, for our streets and drainage? Ms. Russell said no.

Melanie Oldham commented on this item, her concern is about property owners protesting their taxes with the Appraisal District. She also asked do city's figure the budget and then set the tax rate?

Manning Rollerson spoke on the drop of property taxes; his concern is the value of his property dropping.

Councilman Yates asked if the Tax Rates has anything to do with valuation. Ms. Russell said not necessarily. She said that they are based on the increase of valuations.

Councilman Yates said that there are a number of people protesting the valuation on their property right now. He said that property taxes are the worst taxes there are.

Assistant City Manager Stephanie Russell said that at the next city council meeting, council will be presented with the proposed budget presentation. She also said that council will be asked to set the Public Hearing for the Tax Rate.

Mayor Bass said that this will be posted on the website for the public to view.

Consideration of adopting Ordinance No. 2020-2602 amending regulations on substandard and unsafe structure abatement.

Mayor Bass tabled this item until the next council meeting.

He said that there will be a few more changes made to this ordinance. He said that he knows that this is a very important issue with unsafe structures, but he wants to make sure that this properly follows the constitution. He said this will be brought back before council. Mayor Bass said that it will be posted on the website, in plenty of time for the public to view before the next council meeting.

WORK SESSION:

Councilman Green asked Building and Code Director, Billy Shoemaker if this Unsafe Structure Ordinance, will affect residential as well as commercial buildings? Mr. Shoemaker said yes. Mr. Green also asked about the golf carts and ATV's being driven on the streets. He wants to know how this can be made legal in the City of Freeport.

Mr. Kelty said that he has the City Attorney looking into this.

Councilman Cain said that he wants to make sure the alleys on 7 & 8 Street, 8 & 9 Street at Yaupon and Dixie are looked at and considered for some road repair this next year. He said they are in horrible condition.

Councilman Roy Yates said that the Fishing Fiesta was cut back this year due to the virus. He said that this is something the City needs to support. He said that there are businesses closing down, some because of the virus, and some because the city is not supporting them well enough.

Councilwoman Sandra Loeza said that she asked about the lighting on some of the streets she said that they are so dark. Mr. Kelty said that he has not heard anything back yet, but they are working with Centerpoint on this.

Mayor Bass said that there is a tropical storm in the Caribbean, he said that we need to make sure we have the pumps available through the rental company. Mayor Bass said that he appreciates the monthly reports from the Department Heads.

City Manager Tim Kelty said that the upcoming bond there was a rating call, and we are expecting some type of double A rating. Mr. Kelty said that the better rating we have, the better interest rate we will get. He said that we received bids on our annual insurance premiums and we will be receiving a 5 to 10% decrease with our current provider. Mayor Bass asked if this is same coverage as before, Mr. Kelty said yes, the same coverage.

Update on reports / concerns from Department heads

There was no comment from Department heads.

Open session was closed at 6:56 pm and Council entered into Executive Session.

CLOSED SESSION:

Executive Session regarding a.) (Personnel Matters) City Manager Evaluation b.) consultation with city attorney (Potential Litigation) in accordance with Government Code Annotated, Chapter 551, Sections 551.071, 551.074.

REGULAR SESSION

Mayor Brooks Bass reconvened regular session at 7:30 P.M.

City Manager Evaluation (Personnel Matters)

On a motion by Councilwoman Loeza seconded by Councilman Green, with all present voting “Aye” 5-0 Council unanimously approved the 1.2% Merit Raise to City Manager Tim Kelty, being retroactive from October 2019, based on his annual evaluation.

Adjourn

On a motion by Councilman Cain, seconded by Councilman Yates, with all present voting “Aye”, Mayor Bass adjourned the meeting at 7:39 PM.

Mayor, Brooks Bass
City of Freeport, Texas

City Secretary, Betty Wells
City of Freeport, Texas