

**BURLESON CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
February 13, 2024
MINUTES**

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL PRESENT:

Victoria Johnson
Phil Anderson
Ronnie Johnson
Chris Fletcher
Larry Scott
Dan McClendon
Adam Russell

COUNCIL ABSENT:

Staff present

Tommy Ludwig, City Manager
Eric Oscarson, Deputy City Manager
Harlan Jefferson, Deputy City Manager
Amanda Campos, City Secretary
Monica Solko, Deputy City Secretary
Matt Ribitzki, Deputy City Attorney
DeAnna Phillips, Director of Communications
Justin Scharnhorst, Assistant to the City Manager

1. CALL TO ORDER – 9:00 a.m.

Mayor Fletcher called the meeting to order. **Time: 9:08 a.m.**

2. CITIZEN APPEARANCES

- None.

3. WORK SESSION

- A. Hold a work session where the City Council may discuss any and all aspects of the City of Burleson. The City Council will not take any action on topics discussed, but may set priorities and direct staff to place items on future City Council agendas. Topics that may be discussed include, without limitation, City Council goals and priorities, city management, finance, purchasing, economic development, community development, capital improvement projects, city facilities, streets, and infrastructure, transportation, public works, code enforcement, parks and recreation, public safety, municipal court, neighborhood and animal services, permits and inspections, Hidden Creek Golf Course, human resources, utilities, trash and recycling, population growth, planning and zoning, traffic, annexation, intergovernmental relations, city budget, taxes and fees, bonds and debt service, water rates and service,**

Old Town plaza, boards and commissions, City Council committees, elections, and events and festivals.

Tommy Ludwig, City Manager, welcomed everyone and gave an overview of the day's agenda.

DeAnna Phillips, Communications Director, began the session with an ice breaker.

Council group activity:

What does council want to accomplish today to make this successful?

Activity results:

- Reduce taxes / leave them the same
- Street repairs (increase)
- Finance options (understanding what money is available, debit capacity, refunding, debit service fund, things that are rolling off, and where the possibility of restructuring)
- Asset management (road study)
- School communication (BISD/JISD) to know where the city could help, anticipate crowding, and projects
- Public Works – infrastructure, storm water runoff, roads, drainage, water, sewer, etc.
- Budget
- Team effort / teamwork
- Make high level decisions in various areas and commit to it even if difficult
- County relationships for roadway

Discussion goals for workshop:

- Priorities for council budget
- Where are we going the next 3-5 years
- City's strategic plan
- Council survey for workshop results
- Budget
 - Budget options
 - Debit Service
 - Refinancing options
 - Water / wastewater / stormwater / infrastructure
- Enhancing communication
 - BISD on future expansion
- Quality of projects
 - Asset management
- Regional Transportation
- ETJ road impacts
- City image with future development

RECESS AND BACK TO ORDER

Mayor Fletcher recessed for a short break at 10:23 a.m. and called the meeting back to order at 10:32 a.m. with all members present.

Eric Oscarson, Deputy City Manager, discussed what a 3-5 year plan looks like for Council.

City services:

- Automating systems
- Data driven services
- Quality customer service
- Interactive maps
- Improving 311 service
- AI-technology to help reduce the physical footprint for citizen environment
- Cross training staff
- Transparency
- Communication

Old Town:

- More parking - parking garage / parking location
- Keep the Old Town feel
- Tourist attraction (advertising Old Town)
- Lighting
- Increase revenue
- Pedestrian safety (walking experience)
- Business partnership on 174
- Increase walkability (need sidewalks)
- Increase neighborhood services
- Consider commercial and residential component to the area
- Closing Ellison Street for walking area during weekends, maybe working hours
- Restoration of residential homes in Old Town to intermix with commercial
- Connection with Hidden Creek Pkwy.

West side of the city:

- Focus on business in that area (opportunities)
- Infrastructure in the area (expand roads to the toll)
- Industrial Park, college and sustainable high tech
- Not enough room ramp, discussion with NTTA about access road.
- Roads to help the residential areas there come to spend tax dollars in our city.
- Bringing old and new Burleson together, consider a focal point like a new City Hall or Library (city services/retail) to draw citizens in.

Transportation and mobility:

- Partnership with Johnson County (possible bond projects)
- Connection to toll road
- Lakewood-Alsbury connection
- Hemphill connection / parallel to Old Town
- Hulen overpass
- CleTran communication

- Sidewalks / trails
- School sidewalks (children mobility)
- Grant funding
- Walkability on Wilshire/174
- Sidewalk walkability – Wilshire/Summercrest
- Enforcement program for blocking sidewalks/trails (parked cars)

Business Park:

- Framework for the next highpoint development on the other side of 35
- Land for specific projects (fire station, police station)
- Balancing business park on the east and west side

Burleson Community:

- Growth but small town feel
- Finding a center of town that will keep us as one town
- Open space parks, community focus center point (Central Park)
- Diversity in housing
- Jobs should match housing market
- Smart density

Priorities for the next 3-5 years:

- Public Works – roadways drainage traffic flow improvement
- City facilities – PW, Public Safety complex, city hall, library, fire
- Economic Community Development – development of west side of city review and update zoning maps and ordinance, explore shovel ready definition complete for state/federal funding
- Civic center conference center – election for hidden creek, sports complex closure, golf course resident
- Finance prudence – building reserve, reduce debit, improvement finance performance, brick and Chisenhall fields.

Council discussed bonds and funds without raising taxes to complete the projects that are needed.

Other priorities:

- Information technology, infrastructure and services
- addressing city facility needs
- employee retention (other benefits, flexible work schedule)
- health, insurance, sustainability
- succession planning
- future business, industrial park
- fiscally, sustainable development

Group activity: city service priority

Group activity results:

- Public Works (sidewalks, traffic flow, roads)

- Economic Development
- Golf course
- IT
- Library
- Marketing and communications
- Service center
- Special events
- Youth and adult athletics

Council discussed citizen feedback for more practice fields, maintenance, and BYA.

Mr. Oscarson continued with possible funding sources to consider.

Possible funding sources to consider:

- Street maintenance fees
 - Solid waste fee (trash trucks driving our roads)
 - Service level cost will be a pass through fee
 - If cart service will reduce the fee
 - Service delivery will change
 - The city has been supplementing the cost for waste service and need to pass the cost on to the citizens, is the cost more than what is provided.
 - Request for proposals (RFP) could potentially led to city losing the loose collection option the city currently has.
- Stormwater fee
 - Impact fees that will be tied to commercial (only used for stormwater)
 - Utility bill fees.
 - Passing something onto existing residents versus new development to pass the fee on.

After a brief discussion and questions from council, consensus was to add to the budget process for review.

RECESS AND BACK TO ORDER

Mayor Fletcher recessed for a short break at 12:28 p.m. and called the meeting back to order at 12:40 p.m. with all members present.

Harlan Jefferson, Deputy City Manager continued the presentation with additional funding sources.

Water and sewer rates

- Increase rates to make it a pass through
- Consider aging infrastructure along with growth
- Will add to the budget process to discuss more

Tax Rate

Homestead exemptions – increase 1% and move up to 5%. If you adopt before July, it will go into effect by October of the same year. Consider drawing the balance down, keeping it down half-million and could get an addition \$1.8 million. Another option is through a cash refinance of existing bonds (of 10 years or more), the city has a 2014 series that could be used for additional funds, plus if the city got a good rate it could be additional savings.

After a brief discussion and questions from Council regarding other bonds, older maturities, and the investment portfolio, the consensus was to look at the process and bring it forward to the Finance Committee to consider.

Mr. Jefferson continued with credit card fees. The city currently absorbs the fees associated with credit card payments. Does council want to look at stopping absorbing the fees? Council consensus was to look at an option for customers to pay the fee for using a credit card or a no fee option for paying through ACH. Council asked staff to put the numbers together and let them see what the savings would be.

Council member Larry Scott discussed Neighborhood Environment Zoning (NEZ), is something that needs to be considered that will be a little stress to the budget. He has identified six (6) potential areas in the city and should discussed in the future.

Mr. Jefferson continued with budget discussion.

Upcoming budget priorities:

- Zoning code
- Finance procedure
- Long term capital improvement projects
- Public safety
- Public works (roadway, drainage, sidewalk, traffic flow, improvements)
- Fleet life cycle replacement and utilization analysis
- Implementation of stormwater fee
- Simplify local voting process

Other:

- Backup site for dispatch operations / one time equipment purchase
- Fleet life cycle
- Public safety

Group Activity: Areas to focus on for this year's budget

Activity results:

- Public Works: street maintenance
- Public Works traffic
- Public Works water and wastewater
- Economic Development
- Senior Activity Center
- Code Compliance

- City Secretary's Office
- City Manager's Office
- FTE's will be necessary for Public Works, Police, and Fire

Tommy Ludwig, City Manager, continued with the presentation on communication between council and directors.

Communication:

- In favor to have an open dialogue with directors, challenge will be asking questions and not giving direction.
- What can we do to improve communications:
 - Respectful each other and understanding guidelines (not to give orders to anyone).
- Staff perspective:
 - Honest with direct feedback.
 - Understanding difference between the community perspective and the professional perspective
 - Celebrate wins with staff
 - Council sets the vision and trusts the directors to carry out the vision
 - Council should work in coordination with staff not on their own
 - Let staff prepare in advance of open meetings to avoid directors being caught off guard with questions.
 - Let staff know any additional information needed on developer presentations so the changes can be made ahead of time.
- Council requested that any surveys referenced on an agenda item (department memo) be linked to the survey results.

Group Activity:

- What do we need from staff to be more effective communicators?
 - Staff direction on some of the items
 - Would like your professional opinion
 - Give us worst case scenario and best case scenario
 - Knowing that a decision could be re-evaluated after six months or a year then they would be willing to try it,
 - Having all the pieces to make a decision would help (could impact the decision)
- What do we, as a council, that makes it difficult for staff to communicate with us?
 - Interaction with staff during the committees:
 - Acknowledging that council knows something more than the staff
 - Having that one other perspective would help us
 - Recognizing the professionalism, professional respect and background and job acknowledge.

Harlan Jefferson, Deputy City Manager, presented the staff results:

- What do we need from city council to be more effective communicators?
 - Sharing questions in advance
 - Feedback in the staff reports and presentation (unified vision)

- Scheduling meetings in advance
 - Committees are a great start
 - Contact information listed at bottom of every department memo to contact the staff with questions.
- Council requested that the presentation not be so wordy, balance with bullet points. Please include past information if it was presented years ago and what was the answer last time.
- What do we, as staff, do that makes it difficult for city council do communicate with us?
 - Not being open feedback
 - Not ensuring council has the same information
 - Not giving them timely accurate information
 - Using department jargon, siloed departments, and more department interaction.

After a brief discussion and questions from council, Mr. Jefferson continued.

Enhancing customer service and relationships:

- Competency / character
 - Results – our track record – past, present and anticipated. Getting the right things done.
 - Capabilities – the capabilities we have to produce and accomplish tasks: talents, attitudes, skills, knowledge and style.
 - Intent – genuine concern and caring for others. Fundamental motive or agenda. Seeking mutual benefits. Acting in the best interest of everyone
 - Integrity – congruency in values, beliefs, and behavior. Deep honesty. Humility and courage.

Customers Service

- Since the pandemic has gotten worse.
- Accepting less than is normal.

Good customer service examples:

- How the staff dealt with the situation.
- Communication

Approach to customer service:

- Step 1 define your ideal customer service experience
- Step 2 Discover your customer ideal service experience
- Step 3 Integrate your vision with their needs
- Step 4 Build effective system to ensure consistency
- Step 5 Exceed customer expectations

City management has been working to improve staff capabilities through:

- Training
 - Upcoming director retreat in March
- Development
 - Mentorship program (6 months)

- Selection of staff (career interest)

Building relationships with the community through city events, public safety, police and fire and through Connect with Council:

Amanda Campos, City Secretary, presented Connect with Council opportunities:

True engagement with the citizens

Where are we lacking?

Touch the community than just attending events

- Civic academy, positive feedback,
- Burleson teen government academy
 - Youth age, city government, employee retention, internship
- Coffee with Council
 - One on one with community, free soda, popcorn, sit with two and about whatever or subject matter
- Active adult luncheon/coffee
- Senior center and ISD retirement
 - Quorum, 2 or 3 to meeting activity informal
- New Resident Mixer
 - 3 or less years
 - Plaza food and drinks
 - Maps highlight restaurant and local shopping.
 - Mobile adoption
- Walk the trails
 - Hired an arborist to help discuss nature walk
- Facebook lives
 - Rotation list
 - Topic specific
 - Keeping with the time limit (set a time)
- HOA, Senior Living, Apartments meeting with residents
 - Mixed demographic

Tommy Ludwig, City Manager continued the presentation with a discussion on the most effective path forward.

Discussion:

- Regional relationships:
 - Communicate with Johnson and Tarrant County
 - City Manager's Office currently meets with Tarrant County City Managers and is working on meeting with Johnson County City Managers.
 - City Secretary's Office currently meets with all Johnson County city secretaries.
 - Mayors are meeting together in Johnson and Tarrant counties.
 - Public Works regional meetings
- Look at TML and regional meetings city could attend or host.

Council member Larry Scott asked if the city could look into adding seniors to the ADA board or perhaps look into seniors aging and disabilities program, need their input.

Next steps:

- Staff will share the notes on everything that was discussed with council today
- The budget will be based on these conversations and council will see many of the items discussed today before them at committee/council meetings.
- The city's strategic plan will be updated with council's input from this meeting and will be brought forward for council's consideration during the budget process.

Wrap up discussion - What did you like about today.

- Bonding between staff and council
- Open dialogue
- Great agenda
- Great location to get away and let us discuss business
- Team building

5. RECESS INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION

In accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code, the City Council may convene in Executive Session in the City Council Workroom in City Hall to conduct a closed meeting to discuss any item listed on this Agenda.

A. Pending or contemplated litigation or to seek the advice of the City Attorney pursuant to Section 551.071, Texas Government Code

No need for executive session

6. ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Ronnie Johnson and seconded by Dan McClendon to adjourn.

Mayor Fletcher adjourned the meeting.

Time: 3:32 p.m.

Monica Solko
Deputy City Secretary