

STATE OF TEXAS §  
COUNTY OF CAMERON §  
TOWN OF LAGUNA VISTA §

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE LAGUNA VISTA TOWN COUNCIL**

DATE: August 14, 2024  
TIME: 6:00 p.m.  
PLACE: Town of Laguna Vista City Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Christopher Romero, Mayor Pro-Tem  
Johvonne Howard, Council Member Place 2  
Kenneth Cornelius, Council Member Place 4  
Teresa Bryant, Council Member Place 5  
Miguel Hernandez, Council Member Place 6

Alan T. Ozuna, Esq.  
Rendie R. Gonzales, City Manager  
Crystal Chapa, City Secretary  
Greg Cruz, Police Commander  
Steve Reyes, Police Sergeant  
Neil Waters, Fire Chief  
Norma Barbosa, Court Clerk  
Karla De La Pena, City Clerk

MEMBERS ABSENT: Michael Carter, Mayor

Please note: Council Member Howard arrived at 6:27pm

**ORDER OF BUSINESS**

• **Call to Order**

Mayor Pro-Tem Romero called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.

• **Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance**

Invocation led by Mayor Pro-Tem Romero.

• **Roll Call/Excused Absences**

**OPEN FORUM** - At this time, audience is allowed 3 minutes per person to address the Council on any topic. There will be no discussion or formal action taken during this agenda item. The speaker must identify themselves before speaking. A Speaker Request Form must be presented to the City Secretary prior to the meeting.

Mr. Bill Baty of 14 Lakewood Dr. spoke about the City Ordinances and the website.

Mrs. Charlene Kuprel spoke about the proposed Tax Rate.

Mayor Pro-Tem Romero asked the Town Attorney Mr. Ozuna if he could clarify the phrasing of the Tax rate as an increase. Town Attorney then clarified the phrasing of the tax rate increase.

**NEW BUSINESS** – Discussion, consideration, and possible action on each of the following items:

- **MINUTES** – Consideration and possible action to approve the following minutes:
  - July 9, 2024, Regular Town Council meeting

**Motion** was made by Council Member Bryant to approve the July 9<sup>th</sup> minutes.

**Second** was made by Council Member Hernandez.

**VOTE**

Council Member Romero	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Howard	Aye	Council Member Hernandez	Aye
Council Member Cornelius	Aye		

**Motion Carried**

**FINANCIAL REPORTS** – Review of Monthly Financial Reports. (City Manager)

The Check Register, Bank Reconciliation, Income Statement, and Balance Sheets were provided to Council for review. Rendie advised that we are tracking on budget for both.

Rendie advised that we are at 93 percent collected on revenue, for expenses we are at 76 percent and on track for both.

**TRAVEL REQUESTS** – Consideration and possible action to approve travel as follows: (City Manager)

Rendie advised that Duvie is asking to attend the Plumbing Inspector Preparation Exam Course and this is the last portion of the exam preparation before she takes her test for the last certification that she needs.

Rendie then advised that she was approached by the CaraCara Trails to see if she was interested in them sponsoring her to attend a training with them and travel to the conference. They are paying for the conference entry fee.

- Duvie Alcozer, September 13-14, 2024 in Tyler Texas for Plumbing Inspector Preparation Exam Course.
- Rendie Gonzales, September 4-6, 2024 in Austin Texas for Texas Trails Active Transportation in partnership with CaraCara Trails.

**Motion** was made by Council Member Tolin to approve the travel requests.  
**Second** was made by Council Member Bryant.

**VOTE**

Council Member Romero	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Howard	Aye	Council Member Hernandez	Aye
Council Member Cornelius	Aye		

**Motion Carried**

**ORDINANCE NUMBER 2024-04** – Consideration and possible action on the FIRST reading of Ordinance Number 2024-04 designation restricted and designated fund balance for 2023/2024 fiscal year. (City Manager).

Rendie advised per our Charter we have to have 90 days fund balance in our account. Last year we designated \$580,000 for the 2022-2023 fiscal year, for 2023-2024 fiscal year we are needing to increase the designation by \$141,986.00 for a total designation of \$721,986.

Town Attorney Mr. Ozuna read the caption.

**Motion** was made by Council Member Bryant to approve the first reading of Ordinance Number 2024-04 .

**Second** was made by Council Member Hernandez.

**VOTE**

Council Member Romero	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Howard	Aye	Council Member Hernandez	Aye
Council Member Cornelius	Aye		

**Motion Carried**

**ORDINANCE NUMBER 2024-05** – Public Hearing, consideration and possible action on FIRST READING of Ordinance Number 2024-05 adopting the 2024 ad valorem tax rate for maintenance and operation and for the interest & sinking fund. (City Manager).

Mayor Pro-Tem Romero opened the Public Hearing at 6:21pm

Mrs. Natalie Ruiz of 15 Bethpage Dr. spoke to the council about the notice of tax rate increase advising that even though the proposal is not a tax rate increase it is a tax increase. She further advised that there were other tax rate options available to consider such as the no new revenue tax rate and the Voter approval tax rate that both were lower than the proposed tax rate. Lastly she addressed that qualified voters of the town may petition the town to require an election to be held to determine whether to reduce the property tax rate.

Mrs. Charlene Kuprel of 201 Hallam spoke about the tax rate increase and the effect it is having in conjunction with the County, School District, and Water District all raising taxes. She further advised that budgets need to be cut to live within means.

Mr. Ken Rosevelt of 17 Ocelot Trail asked how much of an increase will the town receive with the proposed tax rate and appraisal district value increases. Rendie answered \$185,083.

Mrs. Janet Frost asked how the math works on the \$185,000 new revenue and how it isn't a larger number. Council Member Howard answered that it is due to not all the money staying with the town and further explained that it is divided up, South Texas gets a portion, PIISD gets a portion, Cameron County gets a portion, the Water District gets a portion, UTRGV gets a portion.

Mr. Guy Frost advised that the council has determined that \$185,000 is needed in order to provide services, the money has to come from somewhere or services need to be cut.

Mayor Pro-Tem Romero thanked everyone for their comments and closed the public hearing at 6:38pm

**Motion** was made by Council Member Cornelius that the property tax rate be increased by the adoption of a tax rate of 0.454124, which is effectively a 9.79 percent increase in the tax rate, with a maintenance and operation rate component of 0.440964.

**Second** was made by Council Member Tolin.

**VOTE**

Council Member Romero	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Howard	Aye	Council Member Hernandez	Aye
Council Member Cornelius	Aye		

**Motion Carried**

**Motion** was made by Council Member Bryant that we adopt as a component of the tax rate an interest and sinking fund rate of 0.013160.

**Second** was made by Council Member Howard.

**VOTE**

Council Member Romero	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Howard	Aye	Council Member Hernandez	Aye
Council Member Cornelius	Aye		

**Motion Carried**

Town Attorney Mr. Ozuna read the caption.

**ORDINANCE NUMBER 2024-06** – Public Hearing, consideration and possible action on FIRST READING of Ordinance Number 2024-06 adopting the 2024-2025 fiscal year budget. (City Manager).

Rendie did a brief overview of the proposed budget advising the biggest increase was in our Law Enforcement and First Responders. She advised that we are the lowest paid police department in the area and in order to recruit and retain staff we are proposing an equity pay increase. Rendie also advised that our EMS is growing with an addition of an ambulance partnership with Los Fresnos as well as increasing our level of care. Lastly Rendie advised of the insurance increases and added that we did not add anything unnecessary to the budget.

Mayor Pro-Tem Romero opened the Public Hearing at 6:42pm

Mrs. Kuprel stated that the public hearing needed to be tabled since the audience does not have copies of the budget.

A member of the audience stated that as the population increases there will be an additional need for services. She then asked if we have a listing of the service calls to be able to determine the growth. Mayor Pro-Tem answered that we do track the services very closely and is a point of consideration and has been a large part of this long-term plan to expand emergency services.

A member of the audience advised that he owns a property in Los Fresnos and suggested looking into the grant they received for their ambulance service. Mayor Pro-Tem advised that Los Fresnos has done a tremendous job of identifying resources, but they also have a larger revenue source. Rendie added the contract for the service with Los Fresno is \$80,000 a year, for us run the service for ourselves is well over a million. The audience member also advised the current City Manager of Los Fresnos did a tremendous job of bringing the city out of being nearly bankrupt by enforcing no tolerance traffic citations and asked if the Town has looked into other revenue resources. Council Member Howard answered that there are huge differences between our community and Los Fresnos, such as the Tax Rate, and the amount of Sales Tax revenue. Rendie advised that Los Fresnos tax rate is 0.6850.

Mayor Pro-Tem Romero closed the Public Hearing at 7:01pm

Council Member Tolin commented that she and the council sincerely appreciate everyone coming and commenting and they do take them into consideration. She continued to comment what makes our small community so charming and to what they are doing to balance it and keep it a community that we all love. Council Member Howard followed up on Council Member Tolin's comment on wanting to keep our small community just that.

**Motion** was made by Council Member Bryant to approve the first reading of Ordinance Number 2024-06 .

**Second** was made by Council Member Howard.

#### VOTE

Council Member Romero	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Howard	Aye	Council Member Hernandez	Aye
Council Member Cornelius	Aye		

**Motion Carried**

**ORDINANCE NUMBER 2024-07** – Consideration and possible action on FIRST READING of Ordinance Number 2024-07 designation restricted and designated fund balance for 2024/2025 fiscal year. (City Manager).

Rendie asked to table this item due to a mathematical error.

**2023/2024 AUDIT FIRM DESIGNATION** – Discussion, consideration and possible action regarding the designation of independent audit firm per the Town Charter. (City Manager).

Rendie advised the council that every year we need to have an independent audit performed.

**Motion** was made by Council Member Tolin to approve the Cascos and Associates as the independent audit firm.

**Second** was made by Council Member Howard.

**VOTE**

Council Member Romero	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Howard	Aye	Council Member Hernandez	Aye
Council Member Cornelius	Aye		

**Motion Carried**

**CITY MANAGER REPORT**

Rendie updated the council on the Grants starting with the CDBG Resilient Grant advising that we have submitted our request for proposal on the 2025-2026 block grant. She also advised there are no updates on the ARPA Grant and that we are hoping to break ground on the Roloff Park Improvement Grant in late fall. Rendie updated on the Glo drainage grant advising it is at 30% finished in the engineering phase, Mayor signed engineering letters, and we will post for 30 days. Rendie advised that the Resilient Grant we are in partnership with should start in late October as well as advising of the two active lease grants and three more lease grants pending approval for the police department. Lastly Rendie advised that the Library Board petitioned for a grant program on migratory birds and a lights out event will take place for it on October 12<sup>th</sup>.

Rendie updated on Peaks Bay ongoing case and advised on the additional crosswalk that TX Dot did not recommend but did suggest the additional signage which we did. Rendie also advised we received from Cameron County Elections department that Laguna Vista will be an early voting location for the November general elections. Rendie then advised that our code enforcement officer did a canvased wide sweep of the addresses on homes in order to ensure emergency management and ambulance services can find residences in an emergency.

Lastly Rendie updated on the events advising that that we will have Officer LeBlanc's remembrance ceremony on September 13 at 9:00 am, October 25 is our Fall Festival, November

11<sup>th</sup> we will have the Veterans Day presentation, and December 13<sup>th</sup> will be our Winter Wonderland Event.

Council Member Howard thanked everyone involved on the proposed budget work and commented that this was the easiest budget she has ever had to deal with. She also added it was a great idea to collaborate with Los Fresnos and with Chief Waters.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion** was made by Council Member Bryant to adjourn.

**Second** was made by Council Member Howard.

**VOTE**

Council Member Romero	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Howard	Aye	Council Member Hernandez	Aye
Council Member Cornelius	Aye		

**Motion Carried**

**Meeting Adjourned at 7:29 pm**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael Carter, Mayor

Attest:

  
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Crystal Chapa, City Secretary

