

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

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

DATE: August 8, 2023
TIME: 6:00 p.m.
PLACE: Town of Laguna Vista City Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Carter, Mayor
Johvonne Howard, Mayor Pro-Tem
Bettina Tolin, Council Member Place 3
Rolando Gonzalez, Council Member Place 4
Teresa Bryant, Council Member Place 5
Silke De Gobeo, Council Member Place 6

Alan T. Ozuna, Esq.
Rendie R. Gonzales, City Manager
Crystal Chapa, City Secretary
Anthony David, Chief of Police
Duvie Alcozer, Building Inspector
Norma Barbosa, Court Clerk
Pura Mireles, Librarian
Emmanuel Zuniga, Public Works Director

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dr. Christopher Romero, Council Member Place 1

ORDER OF BUSINESS

• **Call to Order**

Mayor Carter called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

• **Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance**

Invocation lead by Council Member Tolin.

• **Roll Call/Excused Absences-** Council Member Romero

Motion was made by Mayor Carter to excuse Council Member Romero.

Second was made by Council Member Bryant.

VOTE

Council Member Howard	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Tolin	Aye	Council Member De Gobeo	Aye
Council Member Gonzalez	Aye	Mayor Carter	Aye

Motion Carried

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. Abel Lopez is here on behalf of his sign business, and he has a client in our city that would like to put up a big digital billboard. He is here tonight to understand the ordinances in our city and if this is a project that he can move forward with. The project location is on the corner of HWY 100 and Santa Isabel Blvd.

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

- **MINUTES** – Consideration and possible action to approve the following minutes:
 - July 11, 2023, Regular Town Council meeting

Council member Tolin and Gonzalez pointed out a couple of name spelling errors for Neil and Mr. Beatty to be corrected.

Motion was made by Council Member Howard to approve the July 11th minutes as amended.
Second was made by Council Member De Gobeo.

VOTE

Council Member Howard	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Tolin	Aye	Council Member De Gobeo	Aye
Council Member Gonzalez	Aye	Mayor Carter	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.

Mayor Carter commented on page 1 of the Statement of Revenue and Expenditures under revenue the building permits are below by \$155,000, the revenue is below by \$171,000 but that is mostly the building permits. Rendie added on that same note with revenue the last set of lease and franchise fee will be paid before year end so those are tracking to be on schedule.

Council Member Bryant asked on the check register for Maria Jimenez if the same PO is paid twice, Rendie answered that we have an open PO for the year, and she gets paid every other week for weekly services.

Council Member Tolin asked about the revenues for Court Costs why are we behind on that. Rendie answered that it goes on what was written for tickets and we have more outstanding. Mayor Carter asked if Court Cost are a wash as far as the expense and revenue side and that what came it goes back out and Rendie answered yes.

2023/2024 CDC BUDGET– Consideration and possible action to approve FY 2023-2024 budget for the Laguna Vista Community Development Corporation.

Tabled until next council meeting.

ENGINEERING CONTRACT–Consideration and possible action to approve Professional Engineering Services contract with Guzman & Munoz Engineering and Surveying, Inc. (City Manager)

Rendie advised the council that last year we went out for two engineering bids, we only got two bids from Guzman and Mr. Cruz so Mr. Cruz had done the initial review of the Sunset Breeze subdivision and didn't go well so we were not wanting to use him again for that. We needed an engineer to review the construction set of plans for Sunset Breeze, so we reached out to Guzman and Munoz to look at the Sunset Breeze plans and the contract that arrived for that specific task and Mr. Ozuna has reviewed it. These are the engineers that we used for the Grant application for the drainage.

Mayor Carter asked that the \$200 per plat is a flat rate and there wouldn't be added hours on top, Rendie answered it would be per plat and Mr. Ozuna clarified.

Council Member De Gobeo stated that she is so happy we have an engineer, finally we are not engineers and it is a lot of responsibility on our shoulders and now the specialists can do their job. Mayor Carter added that during the review we need to make sure our costs and the engineers' costs are covered.

Motion was made by Council Member Tolin to approve the Engineering Contract with Guzman & Munoz.

Second was made by Council Member De Gobeo.

VOTE

Council Member Howard	No	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Tolin	Aye	Council Member De Gobeo	Aye
Council Member Gonzalez	Aye	Mayor Carter	Aye

Motion Carried

Item # 6 was moved to follow item #7.

2023/2024 FISCAL BUDGET – Consideration and possible action on the 2023/2024 Fiscal Budget.
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Rendie gave the council a brief overview of the 2023/2024 budget proposal advising that the tax rate proposal is using a \$0.01 increase from 2022/2023. Rendie advised on the Prior year comparison for expense the difference is composed of a 3% raise for staff, \$1,000 wage equality adjustment for chief waters for Fire Marchall certification, EMS positions, and Insurance increases. We would like to buy HR module for MIP software that will help track vacation and sick leave for payroll. Right now, it is just tacked on an Excel spreadsheet.

Council Member De Gobeo asked that the \$8,000 is a onetime payment there won't be more costs, and Rendie answered that we already pay the monthly fees this will be just for an additional module and set up.

Rendie advised the vehicle cost for EMS at \$70,000 and Police at \$61,000. She further advised of public works request for either a new tractor or tractor attachment for current tractor.

Mayor Carter advised at the last meeting we discussed the decisions between the park improvements and establishing an EMS and we went with EMS and some park improvements also. Mayor further discussed the \$0.01 increase and compared the surrounding cities and advised that we are considerably lower. By having such a low tax rate, we are only hurting ourselves,

Council Member De Gobeo asked when was the last time we raised the tax rates, Mayor Carter answered it has been a long time and even then, it was only a penny. Council member De Gobeo commented it is really challenging because we are trying to think about our residents, and everything is going up and it's not stopping but on the other side our residents are expecting a lot of services from the city, and we need to make sure we can provide realistic goals and we haven't done anything with taxes in a really long time.

Mayor Carter advised that the State did pass the \$100,000 Homestead exemption that will help on the school taxes and in turn help out or local families. We will be putting in a whole new department and Mayor thinks going up a little more to \$0.04 and won't be that big of a hit to any individual family and then we will be able to support the EMS going forward. Mayor added if we go up \$0.04 that would be \$125,000 and that could cover most of the employee wages with that.

Council Member Tolin stated if we didn't have such a tangible important lifesaving service that will result from this it would be a different story. This is a very critical and important service for our community.

Mayor Carter stated that people always say that have these services in Port Isabel, Harlingen, Los Fresnos, and the Island and we don't have it here and that's because our tax rate is two thirds of

what they are getting. That makes up to why we can't afford to have that stuff so a little increase now and hopefully we don't have to hit them really hard again in the future.

Council Member De Gobeo asked if we can plug in numbers, so we have an idea and Mayor Carter answered that it is \$32,000 for every penny.

Mayor Carter stated that our volunteer fire department is fantastic and has been fantastic for years but our community is growing and we haven't changed our structure at all. Mayor continued to state that he is proposing to do the majority of these purchases except for the EMS vehicle out of the ARPA funds. We are unable to do the EMS vehicle out of ARPA due to needing the vehicle within two months. Rendie added that we have an offer, one of the current fire department volunteers was a fire chief in another town and he has a vehicle that is ready, has a light bar and is ready to go, it is 2017 Toyota Tundra for \$33,000.

Mayor Carter asked Rendie if there is a line by line for the budget, Rendie advised yes. Mayor advised there is not a whole lot of change except for the payroll. Rendie added that our budget was fine this year, and we didn't have to ask for any amendments other than the expenses going up such as the insurance almost every department has stayed the same with very minimal changes. Council Member De Gobeo commented that it is so nice, so much easier, and organized and thanked Rendie for that.

Mayor Carter stated that this year will be the worst year because the property tax relief bill will not affect this year's taxes, it will affect next year's taxes. Council Member Howard asked if it would be helpful, and Mayor Carter answered it will be helpful because you will have \$100,000 reduced though your school taxes.

Motion was made by Council Member Howard to approve the 2023/2024 fiscal budget as proposed in discussion.

Second was made by Council Member Tolin.

VOTE

Council Member Howard	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Tolin	Aye	Council Member De Gobeo	Aye
Council Member Gonzalez	Aye	Mayor Carter	Aye

Motion Carried

TAX RATE– Consideration and possible action regarding proposed Tax Rate and setting public hearing.

Mayor Carter advised that we need to set a date for the public hearing. Rendie advised that the proposed date for the first reading is August 21st and the second reading on August 22nd.

Council Member Tolin stated prior to making motion that in light of the fact we as a town have not raised our tax rate in approximately six years and in order to bring us in line with the service, we plan to offer this budget year particularly regarding real time EMS response time to raise the tax rate.

Mayor Carter stated when he first started on the council, we had 120-day reserve in our fund balance then we dropped below 90 days and it's taken years to get it back, by city charter we need to have it over 90 days, and we are finally back there again. It is important to ensure that our town is fiscally healthy for possible emergencies in the future and thanked everyone.

Motion was made by Council Member Tolin to raise the tax rate by five cents.
Second was made by Council Member De Gobeo.

VOTE

Council Member Howard	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Tolin	Aye	Council Member De Gobeo	Aye
Council Member Gonzalez	Aye	Mayor Carter	Aye

Motion Carried

RESOLUTION 2023-20 – ARPA FUNDS– Consideration and possible action to approve Resolution 2023-20 regarding the designation of ARPA Funds. (City Manager)

Rendie advised the council that the remaining undesignated ARPA Balance is \$287,883.95. We can spend this instead of our fund balance for the Capitol outlay items and advised that we are in need of electronic storage at City Hall and PD and may come with a proposal for that.

Mayor asked that the Fire Department Vehicle and Police vehicle on the ARPA have not shown up yet and Rendie answered no, but they are ordered, the price is locked in, and the PO is done.

Council Member Howard stated that the MIP HR Module is super important and if you are still doing the daily inputting on excel that is tedious work that can be put somewhere else. The school district on the pay stub we have everything there.

Mayor Carter advised that we need to make a decision on the Public Works if we are going to buy another tractor, we bought one a couple years ago. Rendie advised that we have 1.5 tractors right now, the new one is great and works great, the other one we keep chugging it along it is good but, in the shop, right now. Council Member Tolin asked if the repairs are exceeding its effectiveness and Rendie answered no, not yet. Council Member Tolin asked if we wait on that and Rendie answered that they will be happy with either the attachment to clear out the ditches. Council Member Tolin then asked what would the impact of not getting another tractor be and Rendie answered it would impact the scheduling some in the event the tractor broke in may slow down the process.

Mayor Carter stated we haven't gotten any numbers for possible Marina improvements so if we were to do the HR Module, PD Unit, and tractor attachments that would be \$94,000 that would leave us with \$192,000 so hopefully we will get some engineering reports for the marina in the next couple of months and hold some funds over at least for a little bit.

Council member Tolin asked if there is any operational impact from buying these items with ARPA Funds. Rendie answered no, we just need to get it designated so we can get the ball rolling.

Motion was made by Council Member Howard to designate ARPA funds as discussed.
Second was made by Council Member Gonzalez.

VOTE

Council Member Howard	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Tolin	Aye	Council Member De Gobeo	Aye
Council Member Gonzalez	Aye	Mayor Carter	Aye

Motion Carried

RESOLUTION 2023-21– Consideration and possible action to approve resolution amending bank signatories. (City Manager)

Rendie advised that we need to remove outdated council members and add new ones to the bank signature cards.

Motion was made by Council Member Tolin to approve resolution 2023-21 amending bank signatories.

Second was made by Council Member Gonzalez.

VOTE

Council Member Howard	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Tolin	Aye	Council Member De Gobeo	Aye
Council Member Gonzalez	Aye	Mayor Carter	Aye

Motion Carried

CITY MANAGER REPORT

Rendie advised the council that the Texas Parks and Wildlife Grant was submitted on July 31st, the Small Cities Grant that was approved at the last meeting for \$150,000 match will be for \$300,000 in total. The estimated receipt of approval or denial is in January of 2024. Upon approval of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Grant we can then start working on the Legacy Grant in

the amount of \$500,000 due in May of 2024 and designated by August of 2024 for a total of \$800,000 between both grants for Roloff Park improvements.

Rendie also advised that she applied for a donation from the Garden for Wildlife for native plants. We were awarded a medium garden value of approximately 192 plants at approximately \$14,000.

Rendie advised there is no change on the drainage grant, and we are still waiting on the contract.

Dollar General has opened, we did not receive any notice. Council Member Bryant went in there and was advised that a Grand Opening is usually 2-3 months out.

Rendie advised that we will be proposing an ordinance designating funds for specific purposes, one will be a restricted use fund for 90-day expenses of \$580,000 and \$150,000 for designated Roloff Park improvements.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Council Member Gonzalez to adjourn.

Second was made by Council Member Tolin.

VOTE

Council Member Howard	Aye	Council Member Bryant	Aye
Council Member Tolin	Aye	Council Member De Gobeo	Aye
Council Member Gonzalez	Aye	Mayor Carter	Aye

Motion Carried

Meeting Adjourned at 7:13 pm



Michael Carter, Mayor

Attest:



Crystal Chapa, City Secretary