

MINUTES
SPECIAL CALLED CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF STAFFORD, TEXAS
WEDNESDAY, JULY 31, 2024

On the 31st day of July, 2024, at 3:00 p.m., the City Council of Stafford, Texas met in the Council Chambers. The following members of the City Council were present: Mayor Ken Mathew, Mayor Pro Tem Alice Chen, and Council Members William K. Bostic Jr., Tim Wood, Christopher Caldwell, and Virginia Rosas. Absent: Council Member Xavier Herrera. The following City Staff were present: City Secretary Roxanne Benitez, Chief Financial Officer Alka Shah, Chief of Police Richard Ramirez, Assistant Police Chief Kelly Wright, Fire Chief Larry Di Camillo, Director of Human Resources Shanell Garcia, Director of Public Works/Development Services Kyle Jung, Senior Development Services Specialist Laura Morales, Code Compliance Administrator Scott McElrath, Police Captain Nathan Cohn, Director of Information Technology Ryan Young, Fire Marshal Jon Lopez, Assistant Fire Marshal Jennifer Maldonado, Police Administration Coordinator Renote Cross, and Director of Recreation Susan Ricks.

1. Call to Order.

Mayor Mathew called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

2. Pledges of Allegiance.

Council Member Wood led the pledge to the United States flag. Council Member Rosas led the pledge to the Texas flag.

3. (a) Presentation by Mayor Mathew of Budget Message for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

Mayor Mathew presented and read his budget message in its entirety.

(b) Public comments on item (a).

Public comments were received from the following:

- Joe Longoria, who lives at 12811 Linda Street, provided comments on the Mayor's message. He asked why the budget workshop was scheduled for 3:00 p.m. Mr. Longoria advised of an email he sent previously and requested that all respond.

(c) Possible Consideration of appropriate action on item (a).

No action was taken.

4. Budget Workshop on proposed FY 2024-2025 Budget of the City of Stafford, with a suspension of the rules, including the following:

(a) Layout of Budget by Mayor, Ken Mathew.

- (b) Presentation by Finance Department.
- (c) Other items related to the FY 2024-2025 Budget.

Mayor Mathew spoke on the proposed budget, including Plan A and Plan B.

Chief Financial Officer Alka Shah thanked Mayor Mathew, the Finance Committee, Finance Department Staff, City Staff, and citizens for their assistance with the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025. She provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding the proposed budget.

Ms. Shah answered questions from the Council Members.

The Council Members discussed proposed budget numbers and previous budget spending.

- (d) Public comments on items (a-c).

Public comments were received from the following:

- Cliff Cowperthwait, who lives at 111 Squires Bend, spoke of his concerns with the proposed budget. He also spoke about current spending. Mr. Cowperthwait also spoke about the City's current 380 agreements.
- Greg Holsapple, who lives at 13111 Naples Lane, spoke of budgets for various governmental entities. He also spoke on employee raises, insurance increases, property tax increases, and lack of police officers. Mr. Holsapple suggested that the Council think of other ways.
- Joe Longoria, who lives at 12811 Linda Street, asked if Budget A took into consideration the departmental requests and included the 3% cost of living adjustment (COLA). Mr. Longoria asked if Budget B included the departmental requests and 3% COLA.
- Lana Hoelsing, who lives at 327 N. Esplanade Lane, advised that she moved to the City based on no property tax. She spoke on funding the Police Department and salary increases. Mrs. Hoelsing advised that a lot of people would leave if a property tax was implemented.

- (e) Possible Consideration of appropriate action on items (a-c).

Mayor Mathew read some information from the proposed budget.

No action was taken.

- 5. (a) Discussion regarding Finance Committee meetings.

Council Member Wood advised that he requested this item be added to the agenda. He requested clarification regarding who could call a Finance Committee meeting. Mayor Mathew provided clarification.

- (b) Public comments on item (a).

Public comments were received from the following:

- Cliff Cowperthwait, who lives at 111 Squires Bend, advised that Stafford was a strong mayor form of government, and the Mayor was allowed to cancel meetings.
- Joe Longoria, who lives at 12811 Linda Street, suggested a facilitated workshop for the Council Members. He spoke about his previous experience as a school board member. Mr. Longoria advised that the Mayor had the authority to assign committees.
- Lana Hoelsing, who lives at 327 N. Esplanade Lane, advised that there was a lot of nitpicking and suggested that the Council Members let the Mayor do his job.

(c) Possible consideration of appropriate action on item (a).

Council Member Wood made a motion to put the item on the next regular City Council agenda, and Council Member Rosas seconded the motion. Mayor Mathew, Mayor Pro Tem Chen, and Council Members Bostic, Wood, Caldwell, and Rosas voted “Aye”. “Nay” – none. Motion passed 6-0.

6. (a) Update from Chief Financial Officer and Finance Committee regarding Budget B.

Council Member Wood advised that he requested the item be added to the agenda. Chief Financial Officer Alka Shah provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding departmental requests for Budget B, proposed property tax costs depending on home valuations, and property tax allocations.

Council Member Rosas exited the meeting at 5:21 p.m.

Council Member Rosas entered the meeting at 5:22 p.m.

Chief Financial Officer Alka Shah provided a list of frozen positions.

(b) Public Comments on item (a).

- Cliff Cowperthwait, who lives at 111 Squires Bend, advised that the proposed tax was probably necessary and understood why it was being done. He spoke on a tax freeze for citizens over sixty-five years of age.
- Joe Longoria, who lives at 12811 Linda Street, advised that the check for the SMSD student resource officers (SROs) was sent earlier that day. He spoke of a City Manager position that was mentioned by Council Member Bostic, and added that a City Manager was not needed, the Mayor could do the job. Mr. Longoria provided information on average home valuations that he received from several realtors.

Council Member Wood made a motion to allow Mr. Longoria to speak for an additional one minute, and Council Member Rosas seconded the motion. Mayor Mathew, and Council Members Bostic, Caldwell, Wood, Chen, and Rosas voted “Aye”. “Nay” – none. Motion carried 6-0.

- Mr. Longoria suggested that everyone work together. He advised that sales tax revenue was not providing the quality-of-life citizens wanted. Mr. Longoria advised that something needed to be done. He spoke of standing water and mosquitos in ditches.
- Lana Hoelsing, who lives at 327 N. Esplanade Lane, advised that she saw bickering and backbiting when the Mayor was trying to talk and suggested that the Mayor be allowed to speak. She also advised that she was disappointed with the way some of the Council Members acted toward the Mayor and added that the Mayor needed to be respected.
- John Hoelsing, who lives at 327 N. Esplanade Lane, spoke on transparency and that there had not been any transparency from the City Council. He suggested that departments be cut due to lack of funding. Mr. Hoelsing suggested that the Mayor fix the problems.

(c) Possible Consideration of appropriate action on items (a).

No action was taken.

7. (a) Presentation from Chief of Police and Fire Chief regarding differences in Budgets A and B and potential community impact.

Council Member Caldwell exited the meeting at 5:34 p.m.

Council Member Wood advised that he requested this item be added to the agenda. He requested that Chief Ramirez and Chief Di Camillo provide a presentation.

Council Member Caldwell entered the meeting at 5:35 p.m.

Chief Di Camillo provided a presentation on Budget A, departmental requests for Budget B, and proposed Budget B for the Fire Department and Fire Marshal's Office.

Council Member Bostic exited the meeting at 5:53 p.m.

Council Member Bostic entered the meeting at 5:55 p.m.

Council Member Wood exited the meeting at 5:55 p.m.

Council Member Wood entered the meeting at 5:57 p.m.

Council Member Rosas exited the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Council Member Rosas entered the meeting at 6:01 p.m.

Chief Di Camillo answered questions from the Council Members.

Chief Ramirez provided a presentation regarding the differences between Budget A and Budget B, as well as the needs of the Police Department.

Council Member Caldwell exited the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Council Member Caldwell entered the meeting at 6:17 p.m.

Chief Ramirez provided an organizational chart for the Police Department. He answered questions from the Council Members.

(b) Public Comments on item (a).

- Cliff Cowperthwait, who lives at 111 Squires Bend, spoke on the Mayor's proposed budget increases. He advised that the Police Department needed additional staff. Mr. Cowperthwait suggested that the PR firm hired get started immediately. He said that the City would get by. Mr. Cowperthwait also said that he was glad the budget workshops were being done sooner this year. He spoke on Fire Department calls during Hurricane Beryl. Mr. Cowperthwait also spoke on the proposed budget and current City amenities.
- Joe Longoria, who lives 12811 Linda Street, advised that the status quo was not enough. He spoke on the needs of the Departments. Mr. Longoria also spoke on income tax received for properties. He advised that citizens should receive the services they needed. Mr. Longoria spoke on his previous experience as a school board member.

Council Member Wood made a motion to allow Mr. Longoria to speak for an additional one minute, and Council Member Bostic seconded the motion. Mayor Mathew, and Council Members Bostic, Caldwell, Wood, Chen, and Rosas voted "Aye". "Nay" – none. Motion carried 6-0.

- Mr. Longoria suggested contracting with Huntsville prisons to have prisoners repair City vehicles. He also suggested recycling or donating vehicles, software, and equipment.

(c) Consideration of appropriate action on items (a).

No action was taken.


8. Adjournment.

Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

ATTEST:



Roxanne Benitez
City Secretary



Ken Mathew
Mayor