

MINUTES
SPECIAL CALLED CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF STAFFORD, TEXAS
MONDAY, AUGUST 5, 2024

On the 5th day of August, 2024, at 12:00 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 (arrived at 12:02 p.m.), Virginia Rosas, and Xavier Herrera (arrived at 12:01 p.m.). Absent: None. The following City Staff were present: City Secretary Roxanne Benitez, Chief Financial Officer Alka Shah, Chief of Police Richard Ramirez, Fire Chief Larry Di Camillo, Director of Public Works/Development Services Kyle Jung, Assistant Chief of Police Kelly Wright, and City Attorney Bridgette Begle.

1. Call to Order.

Mayor Mathew called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

2. Pledges of Allegiance.

Mayor Pro Tem Chen led the pledge to the United States flag. Council Member Rosas led the pledge to the Texas flag.

3. Public Comments.

Public comments were received from the following:

- Cliff Cowperthwait, who lives at 111 Squires Bend, spoke of the proposed rate. He advised that most Council Members ran their campaign on no property taxes and suggested that the first motion be for zero property taxes. He spoke of residents who were on a fixed income.
- Carla Cargle, who lives at 12903 Tyler Lane, asked if City expenses were reduced, if there would be a rate cap, what were the details, would there be a grandfathered rate for those who were of a certain age, what would the tax revenues cover, and what budgeted items were necessities.
- Greg Holsapple, who lives at 13111 Naples Lane, advised that he was against any additional taxes. He spoke of his concerns regarding the proposed tax increase. Mr. Holsapple suggested that, if a tax was implemented, a tax freeze for seniors be implemented. He advised that the proposed property tax should not be called a public safety tax.
- Jean Harris, who lives at 927 Robinwood, spoke of citizens who were on limited incomes. She advised to take into consideration long-term and short-term homeowners. Ms. Harris spoke on rental properties that were not registered.

- Joe Longoria, who lives at 12811 Linda Street, thanked the other citizens for attending and suggested that they attend the town hall meetings. He asked why the meeting was scheduled for noon on a weekday. Mr. Longoria asked if questions asked during public comments were included in the minutes and if anyone follows up. He spoke on renters having the ability to vote in City elections if they were registered.

Council Member Wood made a motion to allow Mr. Longoria to speak for an additional one minute, and Council Member Herrera seconded the motion. Mayor Mathew, Mayor Pro Tem Chen, and Council Members Bostic, Wood, Caldwell, Rosas, and Herrera voted “Aye”. “Nay” – None. Motion carried 7-0.

- Mr. Longoria spoke on the lack of police protection. He also spoke on ways others could reduce spending such as homeowners’ insurance and vehicle insurance. Mr. Longoria advised that they need to ensure that the Police Department had what they needed.
- Joann Holloway, who lives at 2526 Jester Lane, spoke on an article from 1995. She also spoke on sales tax revenue. Ms. Holloway spoke on Police Department salary increases. She advised that she was against property taxes. Ms. Holloway spoke on rental properties in her area.
- Ray Thomas, who lives at 161 Go Man Go, spoke on the process for voting on property taxes. He suggested that there be a Budget C. Mr. Thomas advised that he was sensitive to those that \$500 would be a financial burden. He advised that he was in favor of a property tax. Mr. Thomas spoke on going year to year with unknowns. He advised that city government could not be run like that.

Council Member Wood made a motion to allow Mr. Longoria to speak for an additional one minute, and Council Member Herrera seconded the motion. Mayor Mathew, Mayor Pro Tem Chen, and Council Members Bostic, Wood, Caldwell, Rosas, and Herrera voted “Aye”. “Nay” – None. Motion carried 7-0.

- Mr. Thomas spoke on the consequences of the City putting themselves at risk. He suggested a property tax, that would generate \$500,000, and could be done by City Council without going to the voters.
- Lana Hoelsing, who lives at 327 N. Esplanade Lane, advised that the City went many years without property taxes and did very well. She spoke on rental properties in the City. Ms. Hoelsing advised that the City did not need a property tax.
- John Hoelsing, who lives at 327 N. Esplanade Lane, spoke on the bickering between Council Members. He also spoke on departmental overspending and waste. Mr. Hoelsing spoke on the hiring of additional police officers. He asked who the department heads answered to.

4. (a) Discussion regarding the preliminary 2024 Tax Rate increase to set the maximum tax rate Council can adopt for tax year 2024-2025 and to record the votes of each member of Council.

City Attorney Bridgette Begle addressed the questions that were asked during public comments. She explained the reasoning for the meeting and why it was being held at that time. City Attorney Begle provided the dates for the public hearings. She spoke on the process for adopting a tax rate and the budget.

City Attorney Begle answered questions from the Council Members.

Chief Financial Officer Alka Shah also answered questions from the Council Members.

Leslie Cook, with RBC Capital Markets, answered questions from the Council Members.

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

Public comments were received from the following:

- Greg Holsapple, who lives at 13111 Naples Lane, spoke on the readjustment of citizens' budgets who were low income. He advised that improvements, if a property tax was implemented, would not happen quickly. Mr. Holsapple suggested that the City make adjustments. He advised that he appreciated the public service employees.
- Cliff Cowperthwait, who lives at 111 Squires Bend, advised that the City Council took way too long discussing the item. He apologized to Council Member Wood for a statement he made at a previous meeting. Mr. Cowperthwait spoke on Plan B. He also spoke on a possible property tax locked rate for seniors over sixty-five years old or disabled.
- Joe Longoria, who lives at 12811 Linda Street, agreed with Council Member Bostic that it was unfair to be put in a position by legal counsel in which they had to decide by 2:00 p.m. He commended Chief Financial Officer Alka Shah for her hard work and diligence. Mr. Longoria spoke on Police Department vacancies and equipment needed for the Fire Department. He also spoke on what was needed to keep the City going. Mr. Longoria advised that everything was changing, and the City would need to change with it.
- Karen Hatter, who lives at 623 Reva Ridge, suggested that Council Members be on one accord and added that they needed to do what they need to do as a team. She advised to keep in mind of the senior community and suggested that they listen to the citizens. Ms. Hatter suggested that the Council Members make the right choice for them.

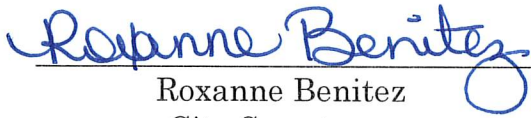
- (c) Possible consideration of appropriate action on item (a).

Council Member Wood made a motion to accept the Proposed Tax Rate of \$0.2999 per \$100, No New Revenue Tax Rate of \$0.0000 per \$100, and the Voter Approval Tax Rate of \$0.01596 per \$100, and Council Member Rosas seconded the motion. Council Members Wood, Caldwell, Rosas, and Herrera voted “Aye”. “Nay” – Mayor Mathew, Mayor Pro Tem Chen, and Council Member Bostic. Motion passed 4-3.


5. Adjournment.

Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 1:44 p.m.

ATTEST:



Roxanne Benitez
City Secretary



Ken Mathew
Mayor