

MINUTES  
SPECIAL CALLED CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
CITY OF STAFFORD, TEXAS  
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 14, 2024

On the 14<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2024, at 6:00 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, Virginia Rosas, and Xavier Herrera (arrived at 6:13 p.m.). Absent: None. The following City Staff were present: City Secretary Roxanne Benitez, Chief Financial Officer Alka Shah, Chief of Police Richard Ramirez, Director of Public Works/Development Services Kyle Jung, Senior Development Services Specialist Laura Morales, Assistant Chief of Police Kelly Wright, Fire Marshal Jon Lopez, Police Captain Nathan Cohn, Police Captain Joe Williams, Director of Human Resources Shanell Garcia, Director of Information Technology Ryan Young, and City Attorney Bridgette Begle.

1. Call to Order.

Mayor Mathew called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Pledges of Allegiance.

Council Member Bostic 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 previous budget workshops. He also spoke about deficiencies in Plan A. Mr. Cowperthwait advised that it was the City Council's responsibility to either accept the Mayor's budget or make changes to it.
- Manoj Thomas, who lives at 134 Nina Lane, read a statement on the proposed property tax and spoke against it.
- Joe Longoria, who lives at 12811 Linda Street, asked that the City Council explain what the process would be and what impact would it have on citizens. He also asked questions regarding the tax freeze and budget adoption.
- Clint Mendonca, who lives at 12343 Fern Meadow Drive, commended the employees who are posting and responding to social media comments. He spoke regarding misinformation on social media and asked for more information. Mr. Mendonca expressed his concerns and asked for a sunset revision if a property tax was implemented.

- Ray Thomas, who lives at 614 Go Man Go Drive, suggested that information be disbursed so that citizens could make an informed decision. He spoke on a balanced budget and providing services to citizens. Mr. Thomas advised that if citizens voted for no changes, they should expect a decrease in services.

Council Member Wood made a motion to allow Mr. Thomas 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 possibility of investors or developers investing in the City. He advised that if citizens were not willing to invest in the City, why would they expect investors to do so.
- Lana Hoelsing, who lives at 327 N. Esplanade Lane, suggested that the Council Members not interrupt the Mayor while he was speaking.
- Ken Floyd, who lives at 311 Fair Oak Court, advised that he supported the Police and Fire Departments. He expressed his concerns regarding Council Members who campaigned for no property tax and the lack of respect towards the Mayor. Mr. Floyd advised that he had several questions.
- Manuel Garcia, who lives at 13107 Joan Street, spoke on development being done in the City. He asked about deals made with developers with nothing benefiting citizens. Mr. Garcia spoke on money that was allocated to businesses. He advised that citizens should not be held accountable for dealings with developers. Mr. Garcia also advised that there was nothing being developed for citizens.

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.

Chief Financial Officer Alka Shah provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding the Plan B budget purpose and details.

The Council Members spoke on their concerns.

*Council Member Rosas exited the meeting at 7:38 p.m.*

Ms. Shah answered questions from the Council Members.

*Council Member Rosas entered the meeting at 7:39 p.m.*

Director of Information Technology Ryan Young spoke on the Information Technology Department’s budgetary needs for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.



*Council Member Caldwell exited the meeting at 7:47 p.m.*

*Council Member Caldwell entered the meeting at 7:49 p.m.*

Chief of Police Richard Ramirez provided historical information on a previous performance audit, changes implemented, call statistics, and cost-saving measures.

*Council Member Rosas exited the meeting at 8:09 p.m.*

*Council Member Rosas entered the meeting at 8:10 p.m.*

*Council Member Bostic exited the meeting at 8:11 p.m.*

*Council Member Bostic entered the meeting at 8:12 p.m.*

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

Public comments were received from the following:

- Cliff Cowperthwait, who lives at 111 Squires Bend, spoke regarding walking quorums and information available on the City website. He also spoke on having funds available in case something was to happen. Mr. Cowperthwait spoke on some points of the PowerPoint presentations.

Council Member Wood made a motion to allow Mr. Cowperthwait to speak for an additional one minute, and Council Member Rosas 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. Cowperthwait spoke on the needs of the Police Department. He advised that a property tax was needed, he was in favor of it, and hoped that it would be on the ballot.

Fire Marshal Jon Lopez spoke on the Fire Department and Fire Marshal’s Office efficiency in spending.

- Jason Mejorado, who lives at 2514 Jester Lane, asked about City Administrator services and advised that the funds would be better used in the Police, Fire, and Information Technology Departments. He also advised that the City Council needed to do better.
- Joe Longoria, who lives at 12811 Linda Street, advised that Mayor Pro Tem Chen and Council Member Bostic gave the perception that their feelings were hurt due to not being on the Finance Committee. He spoke on conversations with Council Members regarding drainage repairs in his area.

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 advised that, every hurricane season, he asked for sandbags, but was told that it was not in the budget and not legal. He also advised that the Department Heads said that they needed the funds and the personnel.
- Lana Hoelsing, who lives at 327 N. Esplanade Lane, advised that she had been listening to the same rhetoric for years. She spoke on the behaviors of the Council Members. Mrs. Hoelsing commended the Council Members who represented those who were not in favor of a property tax.
- Greg Holsapple, who lives at 13111 Naples Lane, spoke in favor of fixing streets. He advised that everyone deserved good streets. Mr. Holsapple spoke on actions of previous City Councils regarding street repairs.
- Manuel Hinojosa, who lives at 12807 Linda Street, thanked the City Council, Chief Ramirez, and the Police Department for their service. He advised that, if proposed Budget A covered all revenues and expenses, then the City Council should vote no to put the petition on the ballot. Mr. Hinojosa also advised that, if proposed Budget A was not sufficient, the City Council had the duty to put it on the ballot.
- Johnny Baiamonte, who lives at 12819 Linda Street, spoke on a comment made by Mr. Holsapple. He suggested a proposed fifteen cent property tax instead of thirty cents. Mr. Baiamonte advised that it would generate over seven million for the departments.
- Ray Thomas, who lives at 614 Go Man Go Drive, spoke on a couple of car burglaries that occurred recently. He advised that he rarely saw the Police Department patrolling in his area. Mr. Thomas spoke on Department Heads needing more resources.

Council Member Wood made a motion to allow Mr. Thomas 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 need for additional City resources.
- Robert Sorbet, who lives at 326 Live Oak Drive, asked that the half-cent that goes to the MST fund be explained. He spoke on restricted funds. Mr. Sorbet asked if Budget A would support the City if there was a recession. He advised that the can had been kicked down the road for sixteen years.
- Ron Droll, who lives at 12103 Audubon Court, thanked the Council Members for their service. He spoke on his previous professional experience, budget cuts, and employee layoffs. He also spoke on the

economy in austere times. Mr. Droll advised that it was a bad time to implement a tax at that time.

- Manny Garcia, who lives at 13107 Joan Street, asked about deals made with developers as well as who made those decisions. He also asked why the residents were having to pay for poor decisions made by City Council. Mr. Garcia asked why there were rental inspection fees for rental houses and not apartments.

Bryan Blaum, FMSquared President, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the Stafford Centre and Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

*Council Member Wood exited the meeting at 9:05 p.m.*

*Council Member Herrera exited the meeting at 9:07 p.m.*

*Council Member Wood entered the meeting at 9:08 p.m.*

*Council Member Herrera entered the meeting at 9:14 p.m.*

*Council Member Caldwell exited the meeting at 9:14 p.m.*

*Council Member Caldwell entered the meeting at 9:16 p.m.*

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

No action was taken.

*Council Member Rosas exited the meeting at 9:24 p.m.*

5. (a) Discussion regarding an ordinance establishing an ad valorem tax freeze for residential homestead property owners that are disabled or sixty-five (65) years of age or older.

City Attorney Bridgette Begle advised that Council Member Wood asked if a tax freeze of zero could be done for those who are over sixty-five or disabled.

*Council Member Rosas entered the meeting at 9:25 p.m.*

Ms. Begle spoke on the process of reducing the exemptions for those over sixty-five or disabled. She provided options for future years.

Ms. Begle answered questions from the Council Members.

(b) Public comments on item (a).

Public comments were received from the following:

- Cliff Cowperthwait, who lives at 111 Squires Bend, spoke on his request to freeze the tax for sixty-five and older or disabled.
- Greg Holsapple, who lives at 13111 Naples Lane, requested that the property tax be locked in at zero for those sixty-five and older or disabled. He advised that he appreciated the efforts of Council Member Wood.



- Robert Sorbet, who lives at 326 Live Oak Drive, suggested that the ordinance pass. He advised that this was an emotional issue for several and suggested that the information be brought up to the voters.
- Manny Garcia, who lives at 13107 Joan Street, advised that anyone over sixty-five should not have to pay. He spoke on his concerns. Mr. Garcia suggested that the proposed property tax amount be revalued and allow citizens to vote. He advised that the City needed to be more transparent.

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

Council Member Wood made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 1283, with the modification that the residential exemption for sixty-five and older or disabled to one-million dollars, 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.

Council Member Wood made a subsequent motion to implement an ad valorem tax freeze for residential homestead property owners who are disabled or sixty-five and older, with the effective date being August 14, 2024, 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.

6. (a) Discussion of an Ordinance approving and adopting the General Budget for the City of Stafford, Texas for Fiscal Year 2024-2025; Making appropriations for the City for such year as reflected in said Budget; And making certain findings and containing certain provisions relating to the subject.

City Attorney Bridgette Begle answered questions from the Council Members.

Council Members discussed the proposed budget.

(b) Public Hearing on Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

The public hearing opened at 10:41 p.m.

Public Comments were received from the following:

- Greg Holsapple, who lives at 13111 Naples Lane, asked if the over sixty-five exemptions would be zero regardless of which budget passed.
- Cliff Cowperthwait, who lives at 111 Squires Bend, advised that there was only one budget and was posted online on July 18. He suggested that the City Council wait until August 19 to decide on the budget. Mr. Cowperthwait spoke on a meeting that was previously held at noon. He strongly suggested that a City Administrator position not be implemented as there would be two people doing the same job.
- Robert Sorbet, who lives at 326 Live Oak Drive, suggested that the City Council vote on the budget on August 19. He advised that he previously

recommended that a City Administrator position be implemented in 2015. Mr. Sorbet also advised that no one could take away the Mayor's authority without changing the home rule charter.

The public hearing closed at 10:48 p.m.

(c) Possible Consideration of Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

Mayor Pro Tem Chen motion to postpone the decision to August 19, 2024 at 6:00 p.m., 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.

(d) Possible Consideration of ratification of Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025. (*Contingent on outcome of item (c)*)

No action was taken.

At this time, Council Member Herrera made a motion to extend the meeting to 11:05 p.m., and Council Member Wood seconded the motion. Mayor Mathew, Mayor Pro Tem Chen, and Council Members Bostic, Wood, Caldwell, and Herrera voted "Aye". "Nay" – Council Member Rosas. Motion carried 6-1.

7. (a) Discussion regarding the proposed ad valorem (property tax) rate for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

No discussion was held.

(b) Public Hearing on proposed ad valorem (property tax) rate for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

The public hearing opened at 10:51 p.m.

Public Comments were received from the following:

- Robert Sorbet, who lives at 326 Live Oak Drive, suggested that the City Council plan for what is needed for the next two years. He also suggested that City Council plan for the slow down.

The public hearing closed at 10:52 p.m.

(c) Announcement of date, time, and location of meeting that City Council will consider adoption of proposed ad valorem (property tax) rate for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.


City Attorney Bridgette Begle announced that the City Council would consider the adoption of a proposed ad valorem (property tax) rate on Monday, August 19, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

8. Adjournment.

Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 10:53 p.m.

ATTEST:

  
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Roxanne Benitez  
City Secretary

  
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Ken Mathew  
Mayor