

MINUTES
SPECIAL CALLED CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF STAFFORD, TEXAS
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2024

On the 25th day of September, 2024, at 6:30 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 6:58 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, Assistant Fire Chief Jose Magana, Director of Public Works/Development Services Kyle Jung, Senior Development Services Specialist Laura Morales, Code Compliance Administrator Scott McElrath, Fire Marshal Jon Lopez, Police Captain Nathan Cohn, Police Captain Joe Williams, Director of Recreation Susan Ricks, Director of Human Resources Shanell Garcia, Court Director Nicole Nguyen, Assistant Chief of Police Kelly Wright, Administrative Assistant Coromoto Gallegos, and City Attorney Bridgette Begle.

1. Call to Order.

Mayor Mathew called the meeting to order at 6:30 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. Public Comments.

Public Comments were received from the following:

- Cliff Cowperthwait, who lives at 111 Squires Bend, advised that it was close to October 1 and the budget had not been adopted. He spoke about borrowing funds to use on reoccurring expenses. Mr. Cowperthwait suggested closing the Civic Center due to the condition of the building. He advised that there were some budget funds being poorly spent and added that the City was out of money. Mr. Cowperthwait also advised that the budget should had been approved already as there had been several meetings. He advised that, by borrowing funds, it would ruin the City's credit rating, and the City would lose money that was gaining interest.
- Clay Foster, who lives at 10500 Fountain Lakes Drive, spoke on the numbers and advised that they were not pretty and had not been for a long time. He suggested that the budget be passed so that employees could be paid. Mr. Foster advised that employees should not come to work worried about getting paid. He also advised that revenue talks needed to be held.

Mr. Foster suggested to let the voters decide on the property tax. He spoke on getting rid of the SEDC, selling the Stafford Centre, and a de minimis tax rate.

Council Member Wood made a motion to allow Mr. Foster to speak for an additional minute, 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 carried 6-0.

- Mr. Foster continued to speak on a de minimis tax rate. He advised that it was a good idea and better than nothing.
 - Joe Longoria, who lives at 12811 Linda Street, thanked the Council Members for serving. He suggested that Council Members respond to email and text messages.
 - Lana Hoelsing, who lives at 327 N. Esplanade Lane, advised that if there were more taxes, they would spend more money. She suggested that there be an organizational chart. Mrs. Hoelsing advised that they should not have the authority to vote on their raise. She also advised that the City did not need, nor did they have the money for a City Manager or City Engineer. Mrs. Hoelsing spoke on the Police Department budget and advised that the Police Department did not have respect for the citizens.
4. (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.

Mayor Mathew advised that he presented a balanced budget and City Council could change it.

Chief Financial Officer Alka Shah provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding the additional requests from Council Members and Directors.

Ms. Shah answered questions from the Council Members.

Council Members spoke on their concerns with the proposed budget and fund balance.

The Council Members and City Staff discussed what adjustments could be made to the proposed budget.

Council Member Caldwell exited the meeting at 8:51 p.m.

Council Member Caldwell entered the meeting at 8:52 p.m.

The City Council discussed each item that was requested at the September 18 City Council meeting. The items that remained on the proposed budget were agreed on by a consensus of the Council Members.

Council Member Herrera exited the meeting at 9:08 p.m.

Council Member Wood exited the meeting at 9:10 p.m.

Council Member Wood entered the meeting at 9:13 p.m.

Council Member Herrera entered the meeting at 9:13 p.m.

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

The public hearing opened at 9:45 p.m.

Comments were received from the following:

- Cliff Cowperthwait, who lives at 111 Squires Bend, spoke on the City Council borrowing funds last year, which had not been repaid and borrowing again this year. He advised that it was suggested to conduct departmental evaluations and town hall meetings, which had not been budgeted. Mr. Cowperthwait spoke on budgetary needs that were deemed essential by the Finance Committee. He spoke on the need to borrow from the fund balance for essential needs.

Council Member Wood made a motion to allow Mr. Cowperthwait to speak for an additional 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 6-0.

- Mr. Cowperthwait spoke on items that were not budgeted for.

Council Member Rosas exited the meeting at 9:47 p.m.

- Clay Foster, who lives at 10500 Fountain Lake Drive, spoke on the 228 employees who work for the City. He advised that the people living or working there were frustrated.

Council Member Rosas entered the meeting at 9:49 p.m.

- Mr. Foster spoke on employee working conditions. He spoke on the lack of emergency equipment and safe working conditions.

Council Member Herrera made a motion to allow Mr. Foster to speak for an additional 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. Foster spoke on the Fire Department employees and lack of equipment. He also spoke on Council Member's endless questions and banter. Mr. Foster suggested that the City Council start fresh and provide new ideas. He advised that if something was not done, the City that was in decline, would be in decay.

The public hearing closed at 9:53 p.m.

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

Mayor Mathew advised that a budget meeting would be held on Monday, September 30, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.

5. (a) Discussion of a Resolution adopting the Fee Schedule for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

Chief Financial Officer Alka Shah spoke on the proposed changes.

Ms. Shah answered questions from the Council Members.

(b) Public Comments on item (a).

None.

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

Council Member Wood made a motion to approve Resolution No. 59-24, as presented, and Mayor Pro Tem Chen 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 the 2025 Holiday Observance Schedule.

Council Member Wood spoke on the two new holidays that were added last year and suggested that one of the floating holidays be removed.

(b) Public Comments on item (a).

Public comments were received from the following:

- Cliff Cowperthwait, who lives at 111 Squires Bend, spoke in favor of floating holidays.
- Chief of Police Richard Ramirez spoke in favor of floating holidays.

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

Mayor Pro Tem Chen made a motion to approve the 2025 Holiday Observance Schedule, as presented, 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.

7. Adjournment.

Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 10:04 p.m.

ATTEST:

Roxanne Benitez

Roxanne Benitez
City Secretary

Ken Mathew

Ken Mathew
Mayor