

## COUNCIL MINUTES

August 26, 2025

Stratford City Council met in regular session with Mayor Wright presiding and the following:

Council: Joe Zak, Michael Hood, Misti McBryde, Ray Lermon, Brad Reed

City Manager: Tommy Bogart

City Secretary: Kathy Rendon

Police Chief: Richard Coborn

PW Supv: Tracie Bogart

ACCE Officer: Kristin Elam

Guests: Kathy Allen, Fire Chief Justin Lanning, Nora Wells, Tim Shefchik, Dena Thurber, Cindy Miller

### **Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance, Prayer**

Mayor Greg Wright called the meeting to order. Council Member Brad Reed led the prayer.

### **Consent Agenda Items**

Mayor Greg Wright presented the consent agenda items for consideration. Motion to approve the consent agenda items was made by Council Member Joe Zak, seconded by Ray Lermon, and approved unanimously.

### **Council Business**

#### **PUBLIC HEARING on intention of the City of Stratford to designate the Cobblestone Reinvestment Zone**

Mayor Greg Wright opened the public hearing at 6:00 PM regarding the Cobblestone Reinvestment Zone.

Kathy Allen explained that establishing a reinvestment zone is necessary to provide a tax abatement for a company, noting that tax abatements cannot be provided for non-profit organizations, only for-profit businesses. The zone would encompass approximately 4 acres at the north end of the RV park.

Mayor Wright commented that this is a standard procedure done all over the state and country, though different names might be used for similar arrangements.

Kathy Allen mentioned she had recently attended a class in Lubbock taught by lawyers from Austin where it was noted that 95% of over 700 economic development corporations offer incentives. They mentioned that Shamrock was one of the few that does not offer incentives, believing that companies should establish themselves without incentives. She stated that only about 30-35 economic development corporations in the whole state do not work with incentives.

Mayor Wright pointed out that the City of Amarillo provides millions of dollars in incentives to attract companies. There was also discussion about a company from California that had shown interest in the industrial park but ultimately chose a location in the Rio Grande Valley after requesting a \$50,000 building that Stratford could not provide.

Mayor Wright closed the public hearing at 6:06 PM.

#### **Discuss and consider action: approval of ORDINANCE # 2025-0826 designating the Cobblestone Reinvestment Zone**

Motion to approve and adopt Ordinance #2025-0826 designating the Cobblestone Reinvestment Zone, establishing the boundaries thereof, and providing for an effective date pursuant to Chapter 312 of the Texas Tax Code was made by Council Member Brad Reed, seconded by Joe Zak, and approved unanimously.

### **Discuss and consider action re: Tax Abatement Agreement with Stratford Texas Hotel, LLC**

Mayor Wright noted that the council needed to approve the tax abatement agreement between Stratford Texas Hotel, LLC and the City of Stratford pursuant to Chapter 312 of the Texas Tax Code. Council Member Reed asked if the new council members had seen the numbers on the tax abatement table, noting that the agreement had been voted on and approved prior to the three new council members joining the council.

Motion to approve the tax abatement agreement with Stratford Texas Hotel, LLC pursuant to Chapter 312 of the Texas Tax Code was made by Council Member Michael Hood, seconded by Council Member Misti McBryde, and approved unanimously.

### **Discuss and consider action re: Chapter 380 Economic Development Program and Agreement with Stratford Texas Hotel, LLC**

Motion that the City approve the Chapter 380 Economic Development Program and agreement with Stratford Texas Hotel, LLC was made by Council Member Joe Zak, seconded by Council Member Brad Reed, and approved unanimously.

### **Discuss and consider action re: Economic Development Grant Agreement with Stratford Texas Hotel, LLC**

Mayor Wright noted that this agreement had been part of the documents reviewed previously.

Motion to approve the economic development grant agreement with Stratford Texas Hotel, LLC was made by Council Member Ray Lermon, seconded by Council Member Michael Hood, and approved unanimously.

Mayor Wright commented that this process had been lengthy with many checks involved but was pleased to have it completed.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION - Tax Abatement Agreement**

This executive session was not held.

### **Discuss and consider action: reimbursement to Jamboree Committee from Hotel/Motel tax fund for advertising for the Jamboree weekend**

Kathy Allen explained that they had decided not to advertise with one publication this year, which saved approximately \$1,300. They instead focused on using local newspapers for advertising.

Motion to approve reimbursement to the Jamboree Committee from the Hotel/Motel tax fund for advertising was made by Council Member Joe Zak, seconded by Council Member Ray Lermon, and approved unanimously.

### **Discuss and consider action: Order of Cancellation for November 4, 2025, Election**

Mayor Wright explained that the three encumbant council members who signed up for re-election were the only candidates who filed. Therefore, an election was not needed, and the members could be sworn in again at the November meeting.

Motion to cancel the November 4th election was made by Council Member Joe Zak, seconded by Council Member Misty McBryde, and approved unanimously.

### **Discuss and consider action re: Ad Valorem tax rate matters**

Mayor Wright presented the item regarding scheduling a public hearing on the proposed tax rate, specifying the desired rate, and placing the proposal to adopt the City's ad valorem tax rate at the September council meeting. The suggested tax rate is 0.820486, which is two points lower than the current budget year.

Kathy Rendon explained that they needed to publish notice for the public hearing in the paper and had a limited time limit to schedule the hearing. September 16th was determined to be the only workable date due to these publication requirements.

Mayor Wright noted that this would be the third consecutive year that the city has dropped its tax rate. In 2023-2024, the rate was 0.882425, and in 2024-2025 it was 0.847. The proposed rate of 0.82 is the highest the city can set without triggering a rollback election.

After discussion about scheduling, the council decided on 6:00 PM on September 16th for the public hearing.

Motion to hold the tax rate meeting on September 16th at 6:00 PM to set the tax rate at 0.820486 and place a proposal to adopt the City's ad valorem tax rate at the September 23, 2025 Council meeting was made by Council Member Michael Hood, seconded by Council Member Misty McBryde, and approved unanimously.

### **Discuss and consider action re: nominations for the SCAD ballot for three (3) board member positions for the 2026-2027 term**

Mayor Wright noted that the agenda item indicated that two current members, Murphy and Whittington, preferred not to serve another term. After some discussion, three nominations were made.

Motion to nominate three individuals for the SCAD ballot for board member positions was made by Council Member Joe Zak, seconded by Council Member Ray Leron, and approved unanimously.

### **Discuss and consider action re: purchase of two new trucks for Water and Wastewater Departments and solicit for financing bids for 2025-2026 fiscal year budget**

PW Supv Tracie Bogart reported that over the past two years, the city had spent over \$31,000 on vehicle repairs alone. She obtained quotes for new vehicles, with the cheapest option being from Levelland at \$57,614 for a brand new 2024 model 2500 truck. Two such trucks were available immediately. They also obtained a quote from Duncan Chevrolet for a 2026 model 2500 at \$63,781, noting that the 3500 model (one ton) was only about \$817 more for the same package.

Council members discussed the merits of purchasing the newer 2026 models versus the immediately available 2024 models, with several council members preferring the newer models for longevity despite the longer delivery time (estimated at 2.5 months). There was also discussion about purchasing two one-ton trucks instead of 2500 models.

Motion to solicit bids for financing for one-ton trucks from Duncan Chevrolet was made by Council Member Brad Reed, seconded by Council Member Misty McBryde, and approved unanimously.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION - Municipal Court Judge**

This executive session was not held as Judge Christian was unable to attend the meeting. Mayor Wright noted the evaluation would be postponed until the following month.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION - Police Chief**

The Council entered into executive session at 6:52 p.m. to discuss matters related to the Police Chief position, in accordance with Government Code 551.074.

**Council will reconvene into open session to consider action, if any, on matters discussed in executive session**

The Council reconvened into open session at 7:43 p.m. Motion to give a 7.53% pay raise to Police Chief Richard Coborn was made by Council Member Joe Zak, seconded by Brad Reed, and approved unanimously.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION - City Manager**

The Council entered into executive session at 7:45 p.m. to discuss matters related to the City Manager position, in accordance with Government Code 551.074.

**Council will reconvene into open session to consider action, if any, on matters discussed in executive session**

The Council reconvened into open session at 9:28 p.m. with no action taken.

**City Manager Report**

City Manager Tommy Bogart reported that Xcel had installed a PANO camera system on one of the city's towers at Stickney. This camera system can detect heat signatures within a 15-mile radius, and sometimes up to 30 miles, to identify wildfires earlier than traditional reporting methods. The system gives the fire chief access to the camera to assist with timely dispatch of equipment to fires. This installation came at no cost to the city or county and is part of a broader initiative across the Texas Panhandle and Excel's service areas in Texas and New Mexico.

City Manager Tommy Bogart also requested that the council schedule a budget workshop for the following week to help finalize the budget before the September meeting. After discussion, the council agreed to hold the workshop on September 3rd at 6:00 PM.

**Citizen Comment Period**

A citizen named Dena Thurber addressed the council with concerns that are attached to these minutes.

Mayor Wright thanked her for her comments and City Manager Tommy Bogart offered to discuss these issues at City Hall, noting that council members could not respond during the citizen comment period.

**Items from the Council**

Council Member Misti McBryde mentioned ongoing issues with skunks in the city, noting a litter of baby skunks under a local resident's tool shed. She also offered her appreciation to Chief Coborn for his continued efforts despite being shorthanded.

Council Member Brad Reed expressed appreciation for city employees' work behind the scenes. He also brought up a grant application to the Area Foundation that he had been asked to support at a meeting, though he had not been informed about the grant application beforehand.

PW Supv Tracie Bogart explained a current project of installing playground equipment at the railroad park to beautify the area and make it more family friendly. The Stratford Area Foundation had approved funding for half the cost (\$7,179.50) of playground equipment that had been ordered for the big park. Tracie also mentioned approaching Valero about potential funding for additional playground equipment in 2026.

Additional discussions included:

- The status of a camera for South Fifth Street, with plans to purchase one for \$1,600 after budget approval
- A draft document prepared by Council Member Michael Hood with questions for Aspen Words to address at their upcoming visit on September 10<sup>th</sup>. The watermark he included did not copy, so he strongly notes "do not copy or distribute." This is a draft only and not official.

- Mayor Wright addressed questions about his residency, stating that he has no immediate plans to leave and has confirmed with the city attorney that he can legally serve through the end of 2025 as he has maintained residence in Stratford for the past 6 ½ months of this year.
- Council Member Ray Leron would like to review the report from the water tank inspections when available.

Police Chief Richard Coborn shared information about recent law enforcement activities, including the seizure of over 750 gallons of red diesel from a local resident and a joint operation with the DEA that resulted in the seizure of \$94,000 in drug money from a Stratford residence connected to a 100-kilo cocaine case in Chicago.

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION – Economic Development**

This executive session was not held. A zoom meeting or possibly a meeting with Council before the Community meeting might be considered.

#### **ADJOURN**

There being no further business, motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Misti McBryde, seconded by Council Member Brad Reed, and approved unanimously.