COUNCIL MINUTES
June 23, 2026

Stratford City Council met in regular session with Mayor Pro-Tem Joe Zak presiding and the following:

Council: Brad Reed, Ray Lermon, Michael Hood, Misti McBryde
Interim City Manager: Eddie Edwards
City Secretary: Kathy Rendon
Police Chief: Richard Coborn
PW Supv: Tracie Bogart
ACCE Officer: Kristin Elam

Guests: Kathy Allen, Justin Lanning, Carolina Jacquez, Fernando Jacquez, Maida Arango, Dick Chumley

Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance, Invocation

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, and the invocation was given by Michael Hood.

Consent Agenda Items

a. Minutes from May 26, 2026
b. Accounts Payable for May 2026

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda was made by Brad Reed and seconded by Ray Lermon. The motion carried unanimously.

Council Business

a. Discuss and consider action re: livestock permit for 1200 Beaver Road

The property owner at 1200 Beaver Road appeared before the Council and explained that livestock had been kept on the property for over 30 years. When the permitting requirement was established in 2012, the property was grandfathered in and neighbor signatures were obtained at that time. The owner indicated that the household currently keeps two to three horses. Staff confirmed no objections. The Council found no issues with the request.

Motion to approve the livestock permit for 1200 Beaver Road was made by Brad Reed and seconded by Michael Hood. The motion carried unanimously.

b. Discuss and consider action re: permit for carport at 621 S. Fulton

Staff explained that a carport variance had previously been approved for the prior residents at 621 S. Fulton. Because the original variance was tied to the individual rather than the property, the departing residents were technically required to remove the structure upon moving. The current owner, Lori Christian, is requesting to retain the carport, and staff advised the proper process was to present the matter to Council for approval of a new variance.

Motion to approve the carport permit for 621 S. Fulton was made by Michael Hood and seconded by Misti McBryde. The motion carried unanimously.

c. Discuss and consider action re: storage shed and carport permit for 701 S. 4th

Staff presented a request for a storage shed and carport permit at 701 S. 4th Street. The property is a corner lot, which triggers additional setback requirements under City ordinance. Staff noted that after reviewing the proposed placement, no safety or visibility concerns were identified for southbound traffic, and that all required neighbor signatures had been collected. The shed itself did not require a variance; the variance request related solely to the corner lot setback for the carport.

Motion to approve the storage shed and carport permit for 701 S. 4th was made by Ray Lermon and seconded by Brad Reed. The motion carried unanimously.

d. Discuss and consider action re: Tx Health Benefits Pool Nomination

Interim City Manager Edwards explained the Texas Health Benefits Pool nomination process, noting that the Pool provides health coverage for the City of Stratford's employees and their dependents. The Pool is governed by an approximately 24-member board, comprised of regional representatives, at-large members, and ex-officio members, which meets quarterly. Mr. Edwards, having previously served on the board for approximately 12 years, recommended the Council nominate Joe Price, City Manager of Canyon, who had succeeded Mr. Edwards on the board and had performed well in the role. He noted that if any city nominates an additional candidate, an election would be held among all participating cities, likely in August.

Motion to nominate Joe Price, City Manager of Canyon, for the Texas Health Benefits Pool Board was made by Misti McBryde and seconded by Brad Reed. The motion carried unanimously.

e. Discuss and consider action re: Order of Election for November 3, 2026

City Secretary Kathy Rendon advised the Council that three seats are up for election in November 2026: the Mayor and two Council Member positions. She presented the Order of Election document for Council signatures and noted that candidate filing would open in July.

Motion to approve the Order of Election for November 3, 2026 was made by Joe Zak and seconded by Misti McBryde. The motion carried unanimously.

f. Discuss and consider action re: RESOLUTION R-01-26 Local Park Grant Program Resolution Authorizing Application

Interim City Manager Edwards reported that while a Local Park Grant Program application had been in process prior to his arrival, he recommended the Council pass on pursuing it at this time. He explained the grant carries a maximum award of $150,000 with a 50% match requirement, meaning the City would need to fund approximately $150,000–$190,000 of an estimated $300,000 splash pad project—an amount he did not believe the City's current budget could sustain. He further noted that the application deadline at the end of July created a rushed timeline, which tends to produce suboptimal results.

As an alternative, Mr. Edwards identified a Texas Department of Agriculture grant opening in October with a more favorable 75%/25% match structure and no limiting cap that the City would reach. He also noted that a future Community Development Block Grant application remained a viable option, as the City had scored well in the prior cycle. The Council deferred to Mr. Edwards' judgment and agreed to pursue the more favorable grant opportunity.

No action was taken. The item was effectively tabled in favor of pursuing alternative grant opportunities.

g. Discuss and consider action re: RESOLUTION R-02-26 adopting the City of Stratford's Investment Policy, and authorizing representatives to act on behalf of the City in all matters pertaining to the City's public funds

Interim City Manager Edwards explained that a review of bank signature cards—necessitated by a recent staff retirement and his own arrival—revealed the City lacked a written investment policy, which is required under state statute. Mr. Edwards presented a policy he had originally developed from TML legal guidance around 2008–2009 and adapted for use in the City of Borger, which he then modified to fit Stratford's needs. He confirmed that all existing City investments, including current CDs, comply with the proposed policy. The resolution also formally designates the correct authorized signatories for the City's public funds.

Motion to approve Resolution R-02-26 adopting the City of Stratford's Investment Policy and authorizing representatives to act on behalf of the City in all matters pertaining to the City's public funds was made by Ray Lermon and seconded by Brad Reed. The motion carried unanimously.

h. Discussion re: current water rates

This item generated substantial discussion among Council members, staff, and members of the public. The Mayor Pro Tem indicated the item was placed on the agenda in response to a volume of citizen complaints following a recent rate change, and noted that staff, particularly Utility Billing, had already been responding to inquiries by reviewing usage histories and checking for leaks.

Several Council members expressed concern that their understanding of what was approved at a prior meeting—a $3.00 increase to the residential base rate, from $20.00 to $23.00—did not align with the magnitude of the bill increases residents were actually experiencing. Council members questioned whether or not they fully understood that the tiered rates would increase by $3 as well. Some Council also indicated that they had not seen the underlying 2009 rate policy document until recently.

Members of the public present spoke to the financial hardship caused by bills they described as having effectively doubled, with one resident citing a $500 water bill for a single-occupant household. Residents expressed that newspaper and website postings were insufficient notification for much of the community and suggested that direct mail inserts with utility bills would be more effective.

Interim City Manager Edwards noted that the City's rate structure appeared to carry a relatively low base rate and a high per-thousand-gallon consumption rate—the latter being inherently volatile as a revenue source, since high bills discourage water use. He cautioned against reverting rates without proper notification, and against reducing rates arbitrarily given that the utility fund was already operating with a negative cash balance and being partially supported by the General Fund. He proposed a review of the rate structure during the upcoming budget process to better align base rates with fixed costs and consumption rates with incremental costs, citing the City of Borger's structure—a $28 base rate and approximately $3 per thousand gallons—as a comparative model. He also recommended the Council develop a formal, Council-approved credit policy so that staff can treat all customers consistently.

The Council agreed that the item should be brought back the following month with a full accounting of the tiered rate structure before and after the increase, along with Interim City Manager Edwards' recommendations for a path forward.

No action was taken. The item was referred back for further analysis and a recommendation to be presented at a future meeting.

i. Executive Session

The Council convened into closed session at 6:53 PM in accordance with Government Code §551.074 to deliberate regarding the appointment, employment, evaluation, reassignment, duties, discipline, dismissal, or hiring for the positions of Municipal Court Judge, Police Chief, Public Works Supervisor, and City Manager.

j. Return to Open Session at 8:15 pm

k. Discuss and consider action on matters discussed in Executive Session for Municipal Court Judge
l. Discuss and consider action on matters discussed in Executive Session for Police Chief

m. Discuss and consider action on matters discussed in Executive Session for Public Works Supervisor
n. Discuss and consider action on matters discussed in Executive Session for City Manager

No actions from Executive Session items k through n were taken.

City Manager's Monthly Report

Fiscal Year to Date Financials

Interim City Manager Edwards presented a financial overview of the City's current fiscal year, utilizing newly created graphical charts to improve Council visibility into the City's financial position. He noted that his goal was to provide more intuitive reporting than what had historically been included in Council packets.

Regarding the **General Fund**, Mr. Edwards reported a favorable position: revenues are currently above the budgeted target line, and expenditures are below it. He cautioned that revenues would begin tapering as property tax collections—the fund's primary revenue source—are largely complete for the year. Drilling down by department, he noted that most departments are operating within budget, with the **Fire Department** identified as the one department currently over budget. Two specific line items were driving the overage: vehicle repairs, which had already consumed 83% of their annual budget, and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) expenditures, for which $7,000 was budgeted but approximately $24,000 had been spent. Mr. Edwards noted that a pending grant reimbursement for the SCBA airbags—expected to cover 95% of the cost—would significantly offset that overage once received.

Regarding the **Utility Fund**, Mr. Edwards noted that revenues are running slightly below the budgeted target, reinforcing his concern about the current rate design. He emphasized the importance of keeping expenditures below revenues given the fund's existing negative cash balance.

Mr. Edwards also reported on several operational matters since his arrival: one full-time employee had been hired to replace a resignation, a seasonal mowing employee had been brought on, and improvements to the animal control shelter—including a new concrete pad and additional pens at an estimated cost of $2,100—had been authorized from within the existing animal control budget.

He also raised the need for the Council to adopt formal financial policies governing fund reserve targets and proposed holding a **budget work session** in the first two weeks of July—open to department heads—so that he could align the upcoming budget with Council priorities. The Council received this proposal favorably.

Additional discussion touched on a surplus ladder truck that had been sold for $5,200, to be split with the County; the repair of a fire department vehicle damaged in a 2022 accident, with costs to be split between the City and County fire department budgets; and the City's bulk fuel tracking practices, with staff agreeing to improve reporting.

Citizen Comment Period

Citizens in attendance were afforded the opportunity to comment in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act. Comments received during this period were primarily related to the water rate discussion reflected under Item 3h.

Items from the Council

Council members recognized staff for their work, including Utility Billing staff for handling the increased volume of water rate inquiries, and Interim City Manager Edwards for his communications and reporting efforts since joining the City.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm with a motion made by Misti McBryde and seconded by Brad Reed. The motion carried unanimously.

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Joe Zak, Mayor Pro-Tem

Attest:

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Kathy Rendon, City Secretary