

REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 24, 2009

The Regular Meeting of the City Commission was called to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Commission Chambers by Mayor Jeff Bearden, and a quorum was declared present.

Present: Mayor Jeff Bearden

Commissioners: Jimmy Dennis, Russell Brownlow, Tra Cardwell and Phil McCuiston

Staff Present: City Manager Mitch Grant, City Attorney Trish Byars. Police Chief Tom Wilson, Fire Chief Kent Smead, Public Works Director Bob Cochran, Finance Director Anne Garmon, Special Services Director Monica Wilkinson and City Secretary Linda Byers.

Mayor Bearden led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. and Texas flags, followed by the invocation.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Dennis moved the following items under the Consent Agenda be approved:

- A. The minutes of the Regular City Commission Meeting held on Tuesday, February 24, 2009, for approval.
- B. Vouchers – February 1, 2009 through February 28, 2009, for approval.
- C. Two applications for Assistance to Firefighters Grants through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. One grant will be in the Vehicle Category and one grant will be in the Equipment Category, for approval.
- D. Interlocal contract with the Harris County Department of Education, to share in their contract with Exxon Fleet Fuel Services for City fuel purchases, for approval.
- E. Application by the Police Department for Edward Byrne Memorial Assistance Grant through the Justice Department for an infrastructure grant, for approval.

Commissioner Cardwell seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

RAYNELL KEY & BOBBY MARTIN REGARDING CONDEMNATION OF
1420 SHERMAN ST. AND 829 MAIDEN ST.

Raynell Key addressed the Commission and requested the City demolish the house at 1420 Sherman due to the condition of the building, safety and health concerns. She is requesting voluntary demolition of the house and the debris and agrees to a lien being placed on the property and she will make regular monthly payments until the lien is paid off.

Mayor Bearden and other commission members voiced interest in getting the building demolished and will work with the Street Department to get the work completed, but regular work schedules have to be taken into account, and this building is not at the top of the demolition list.

Bobby Martin requested that the building at 829 Maiden be removed from the condemnation list.

FIRE DEPART / EMS ANNUAL REPORT

Fire Chief Kent Smead presented an overview of the Fire Department, including personnel and equipment.

He reported that there were 2,514 calls for service in 2008, with EMS accounting for 1,822 and Fire Department for 692. Total number of calls increased 14% from the previous year. The City had 68% of those calls, 31.9% were County related calls, and .10% were out of county.

The Department conducted 11 fire inspections and contacted 1,480 adults and children through the fire prevention presentations.

The department received a total of \$88,345 in grant funds in 2008.

The City Commission all voiced appreciation for the work the Fire Department is doing.

CODE RED PROGRAM

Fire Chief Smead explained that Wilbarger County and the City of Vernon were now in the Code Red Emergency Communications Network. This is a service that can notify residents by telephone about emergency situations or critical community alerts.

The system is capable of sending messages only to people affected by a particular situation, or to the entire population.

There are two parts to the program. The first is for weather alerts, which come from the National Weather Service. The second is for critical community alerts, which affect specific residents in the county or city. The system can make 1000 calls per minute.

Citizens home telephone numbers are already entered into the system, and cell phone numbers can also be signed up for Code Red Alerts if citizens will go to the County's website (www.co.wilbarger.tx.us) Residents are encouraged to verify their home information and add their cell phone numbers to be alerted. They will be able to enroll on the City website (www.vernontx.gov) after May 15, 2009. Citizens can also opt out of being notified.

There was a demonstration in which the City Commission members were called with a Code Red message.

REPORT ON PARKS PLANNING EFFORTS

Special Services Director Monica Wilkinson reported that the parks planning process is on schedule for submission to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department by May 31.

Ms. Wilkinson has conducted eight focus group meetings with over 100 people, including the economic development allies, educators, senior citizens, mothers of young families, workers, youth, and church groups.

A wrap up session is scheduled and a second public hearing will be scheduled for April 6, 2009 to report all of the data compiled during the parks planning process. Preliminary results indicate that the community priority is a swimming pool or aquatic center, additional walking/nature trails, and improvements of the current parks such as better equipment and services.

The Park, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan will be presented at the April 28, 2009 City Commission regular meeting for comment and approval.

APPROVE PUBLIC HEARING ON PARKS MASTER PLAN

Commissioner McCuiston made the motion to set a public hearing for the Parks Master Plan for April 6, 2009 at 5:30 p.m. at the Wilbarger Memorial Auditorium.

Commissioner Brownlow seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

STEP AND GRADE (MERIT) PAY PLAN

City Manager Mitch Grant outlined the Step & Grade pay plan.

Commissioner Cardwell made the motion to approve the Step & Grade Pay Plan, approve 3% merit increases for all Directors, and approve a 3% increase for the Municipal Judge.

Commissioner McCuiston seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

**CONDITIONAL FINAL PAYMENT OF RETAINER FOR COMPLETION OF
NEW FIRE STATION**

City Manager Grant explained that the final payment will be between \$94,000 and \$110,000, contingent upon payment of architect fees by Bates Contractors, and minus late penalty.

Commissioner McCuiston made the motion to approve final conditional payment of the retainer for the completion of the new fire station, with the condition that the payments are issued as joint checks to the sub contractors.

Commissioner Dennis seconded that motion.

Tape #833

Commissioner Cardwell amended the motion to include that the City Attorney ensure the City is within the guidelines of the contract to issue joint checks.

Commissioner McCuiston seconded that motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

The complete amended motion passed by unanimous vote.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Commissioner Dennis made the motion to appoint Gib Baskerville to the Planning and Zoning Commission to replace Wendell Rozzell.

Commissioner McCuiston seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Commissioner Brownlow made the motion to appoint Charles McArthur to the Board of Adjustment to replace Mike Herchman.

Commissioner Cardwell seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

CHANGE ORDER – SOUTHWEST SEWER PROJECT

Public Works Director Bob Cochran requested approval of Change Order #3 to authorize the contractor, Triple L Utilities of Dumas, Tx, to make necessary adjustments in the contract quantities, using the unit prices of the contract, for materials and services not rendered during the contract period.

This change order will result in a reduction of \$15,367.70, Total completed contract amount will be \$3,175,042.60, which is \$17,244.90 less than the original contract.

Commissioner McCuiston made the motion to approve the change order.

Commissioner Brownlow seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

RESOLUTION NO. 874

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF VERNON FOR ACCEPTING THE EXTENDING OF THE WASTEWATER COLLECTION SYSTEM INTO THE SOUTHWEST SECTION OF THE CITY, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS PROJECT NO. 71571 CWSRF Tier III 2002 TEXAS WATER DEVELOPMENT BOARD.

Commissioner Dennis made the motion to approve Resolution No. 874.

Commissioner Brownlow seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

AMBULANCE REPAIR / REPLACEMENT

City Manager Grant and Fire Chief Smead recommend using insurance proceeds from a damaged 2002 ambulance to make a down payment on a new ambulance instead of repairing the old damaged ambulance at an estimated cost in excess of \$20,000.

Commissioner Cardwell made the motion to approve replacing the ambulance with the insurance proceeds.

Commissioner McCuistion seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

PLANS FOR NEW POLICE DEPARTMENT BUILDING

City Manager Grant explained that the biggest cost before the police department occupies the building would be roof replacement. The lower portion of the roof needs repair, but the top portion will need to be replaced. Estimates for the top part of the 3000 sq. ft. roof are \$12,000 to \$15, 000, with total cost of less than \$20,000.

Police Chief Wilson has applied for a grant for building renovation, but it is uncertain whether it will be received. There are not a lot of other renovations necessary, and those costs can be taken care of with grants and budgeted funds.

Commissioner Cardwell would like to replace all of the roof surfaces.

City Manager Grant said that specifications would be written with alternate repair or replacement costs.

Commissioner Dennis made the motion to approve the plans to make the new police department building ready for occupancy.

Commissioner Cardwell seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

City Manager Grant will get bids before coming back to the Commission.

RESOLUTION NO. 873

A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR A PUBLIC HEARING TO DETERMINE WHETHER CERTAIN IMPROVEMENTS DESCRIBED HEREIN ARE EACH DANGEROUS STRUCTURES AND A PUBLIC NUISANCE.

4981 Cottonwood
2200 Maiden St.
930 Main St.
3701 Paradise St.

1430 Fannin St.
925 Main St.
3110 Main St.

Commissioner Brownlow made the motion to approve Resolution No. 873.

Commissioner McCuiston seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

NAME CHANGE OF SPECIAL SERVICES TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Monica Wilkinson explained that the change of name to Community Development Department would more accurately reflect the jobs of building services, code compliance and planning & zoning divisions for this department.

Commissioner McCuiston made the motion to approve the name change.

Commissioner Brownlow seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

GRANT APPLICATION FOR ADDITIONAL POLICE OFFICERS

Police Chief Tom Wilson requested permission to apply for a grant through the COPS Hiring Recovery Program (CHRP) for additional police officers.

The federal grant will be for a period of three years, with the city being responsible for the fourth year. Federal cost would be \$94,366 per officer and the city cost would be \$54,482 per officer.

This grant would put additional patrol officers on the street, and use existing officers for a possible drug task force if grant funds could be obtained for three new officers.

Commissioner Dennis voiced concern that there were problems in keeping the department fully staffed.

Commissioner Cardwell made the motion to approve the grant application for no more than three officers.

Commissioner McCuiston seconded the motion.

Discussion included only using the grant to create new positions, the salary that would be paid to new officers, using a seized vehicle instead of purchasing a new vehicle if officers were used as a drug task force, and not staffing so well as to eliminate overtime.

After discussion, the motion passed by unanimous vote.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Charles McArthur asked if the City Commission had applied for stimulus money for paving.

Mayor Bearden responded that we would apply for funds if we can identify a source. The City has a paving plan, but is not certain of any stimulus funds that will be available. The City is in contact with both Austin, and Washington DC.

There were no other public comments.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 8:57 p.m.



Jeff Bearden
Mayor

ATTEST:



Linda Byers
City Secretary