

THE CITY OF EASTLAND
CITY COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

October 21, 2024

EASTLAND, TEXAS §

EASTLAND, COUNTY §

The City Commission of the City of Eastland, Texas, met in Open Session at Eastland City Hall as scheduled, and notice was posted 72 hours in advance and prior to the meeting.

CITY COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Chairman	Larry Vernon
Commissioner	Richard Rossander
Commissioner	Carol Jones

CITY COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Commissioner	James Doyle
Commissioner	Shirley Stuart

PERSONNEL PRESENT:

City Manager	Savannah Fortenberry
Finance Director	Leslie Zander
City Secretary	Roma Holley
Police Chief	Tim Pitts
Fire Chief	Joe Williamson
Planning Director	Tony Stubblefield
Code Enforcement	Terry Simmons

Guests: Julie Elrod, Juli Cameron, Gary Ford, Anna Ford, Dean Vernon, Jett Whittington, Darren Alsabrook, Kevin Burrow, Jayton Bailey, Bryson Bailey, Robert Culverhouse, Colt Williamson, Jacob Page, Allen Lucky, Jeremy Keith, Nakita McBride, Jennifer Gustin, Dustin Dove, Kenneth Chapman, Buck Williams, Brent Bible, Vance O’Brien,

I. Meeting Called to Order

Chairman Larry Vernon called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance and the Texas Pledge

Chairman Larry Vernon offered the invocation and Commissioner Richard Rossander led the Pledge of Allegiance and the Texas Pledge.

III. Public Comment on any Subject Not listed on this Agenda (Limited to Five Minutes Per Speaker)

No Comments

IV. Approve Minutes of the September 16, 2024 and September 20, 2024 Meetings

Commissioner Richard Rossander made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Carol Jones, to approve the minutes of the September 16, 2024 and September 20, 2024 Meetings

Ayes: Commissioners Jones, Rossander, Vernon
Nays: None
Absent: Doyle, Stuart

V. Financial Report

Finance Director Leslie Zander stated there is nothing outstanding about this month’s report. Chairman Vernon stated the sales tax is up 7.7% and this is the highest August sales tax.

VI. Presentation of the State of Affairs of the Lyric Art Centre

Gary Ford, presented a very informative slide show regarding the Eastland Centre for the Arts, commonly known as The Lyric. This included a recap of the past years events. From the productions presented by the Bankhead Community Theatre to the Art Show/Contest at the Old Rip Festival, the past year has been one of tremendous growth and prosperity. The amount of volunteer hours, 4,897 hours, put forth by several volunteers, who come from all over the area, is an impressive indicator of the commitment they have to the success of the Lyric. He showed a graph that gave statistics regarding the number of credit card sales beginning in 2022. This also showed where the sales are from. In 2022 there were only 48 transactions from 11 cities. In 2024 there were 269 transactions from 43 cities. This is a good sign that the word is being spread about The Lyric. The number of sales from our surrounding cities have increased greatly. Overall, The Eastland Centre for the Arts has had a very successful year and we are looking forward to the upcoming year.

VII. The Board of City Commissioners May Discuss and Take Action on the Following Agenda Items:

- 1. Discussion and Consideration of request for funds to repair Eastland Ballpark Complex.

Kevin Burrow gave the following presentation:

Introduction: The current Eastland Baseball and Softball Complex is in dire need of improvements. Over the years, due to a variety of reasons, the fields have fallen into disrepair. All structures, such as dugouts, bleachers, concession stands, bathrooms, and fencing, show significant wear and tear. Nevertheless, we must try to solve problems to improve our community fields.

Eastland Sports Organization: ESO is a faith-based organization that seeks to teach the fundamentals of sports and promote healthy competition in a faith-based environment that points kids to Jesus. ESO is designed to run leagues for kids and families. Overseeing and maintaining the baseball and softball fields year-round is outside the scope of ESO’s mission and vision. During the spring sports season ESO will assist in helping upkeep the complex.

ESO currently runs flag football, volleyball, basketball, t-ball, baseball, and softball. In the spring of 2023, ESO had around 350 registered participants across t-ball, baseball, and softball. These families spent significant time at the Eastland Baseball and Softball Complex.

Vision for Complex: Maintaining the current fields and overseeing major renovations is outside the scope of ESO’s mission. Still, a partnership is needed between ESO, the city of Eastland, and any field work, either by volunteers or a new organization/committee tasked with overseeing the baseball and softball fields.

Furthermore, to help keep the integrity of the fields and ensure private investments along with city investments are stewarded well, it will be necessary to create a new non-profit or committee that will oversee the complex. This non-profit/committee would oversee tournaments, field usage, and yearly maintenance, ensuring the complex is well maintained. This new group or committee would need to work with ESO and the city of Eastland to ensure these partnerships are sustained. The city would need to continue to support the complex by mowing when requested by the non-profit/committee, paying for water and electricity, and taking care of minor and major maintenance issues as needed.

Quality of Life: We believe any improvements to the complex will enhance the quality of life of families living within Eastland and make Eastland a more desirable place to move to and raise a family. As families leave the metroplex, Eastland is positioned well to grow as a community. We want to provide quality sports programming (ESO) and adequately maintain current facilities (City of Eastland/New Non-Profit/Committee).

Economic Benefit: A well-maintained complex could be used for multiple yearly tournaments that consist of travel baseball and softball teams. (Hotel and Motel Tax Revenue)

Conclusion: Thank you for your time and willingness to consider supporting the growth and development of the recreation facilities for kids, families, and those in the community.

There were several people in attendance who are part of the ESO and are active volunteers. Jayton Bailey and Allen Lucky spoke about the work that the volunteers have done in the past and are willing to do in the future.

Several minutes of discussion between Chairman Larry Vernon and the supporters of ESO was very productive in opening the line of communication.

ESO requested an initial \$60,000 to start repairs and renovation. This is \$20,000 for the restrooms and \$10,000 for each of the four fields.

Commissioner Richard Rossander made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Carol Jones, to approve the funding of \$30,000 to the Eastland Sports Organization for repairs and renovations of the Eastland Baseball and Softball fields.

Ayes: Commissioners Jones, Rossander, Vernon
Nays: None
Absent: Doyle, Stuart

2. Discussion and Consideration to grant permission to the Eastland Lions Club to demolish/reconstruct the Pavilion at the Eastland City Park.

Dean Vernon, President of the Eastland Lions Club, gave a slide presentation detailing projects the Eastland Lions Club have completed at the Eastland City Park. This includes a swing for wheelchairs dedicated to Troy Jones, a dedicated member of the Lions Club. It also includes another swing for people who can't sit in a traditional swing; a picnic table with wheelchair access; a tire sandpit with a toy excavator attached; benches and BBQ pits.

He also presented photos of the existing pavilion and noted that it is in disrepair and that the Lions club would like to demolish and reconstruct it with materials purchased from Bartee Metals.

Nakita McBride also shared the architectural drawings and details of the new pavilion and shared what the cost will be. The Lions club is not seeking financial input from the City at this time.

Commissioner Richard Rossander made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Carol Jones, to approve the request of the Eastland Lions Club to demolish/reconstruct the pavilion at the Eastland City Park.

Ayes: Commissioners Jones, Rossander, Vernon
Nays: None
Absent: Doyle, Stuart

3. Discussion and Consideration of second reading of Ordinance 24-907 changing the Zoning Use Designation of property adjacent to LaQuinta.

Chairman Vernon reminded the Commissioners this is the second reading.

Commissioner Richard Rossander made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Carol Jones, to approve the second reading of Ordinance 24-907, changing the zoning use designation from Agriculture Open (AO) / General Business District (C2) to General Business District (C2) for the property adjacent to LaQuinta.

Ayes: Commissioners Jones, Rossander, Vernon
Nays: None
Absent: Doyle, Stuart

4. Discussion and Consideration of Resolution 2024-15 Implementing Policy for Preventing Use of Prohibited Technology and Covered Applications.

City Manager Savannah Fortenberry advised the commission that on December 7, 2022, Governor Greg Abbott required all state agencies to ban the video-sharing application TikTok from all state-owned and state-issued devices and networks over the Chinese Communist Party’s ability to use the application for surveilling Texans. The bill specifically requires cities and other political subdivisions to adopt a policy: (1) prohibiting the installation of TikTok or another covered application on any device owned or leased by the governmental entity; and (2) requiring the removal of TikTok and covered applications from those devices.

Following the issuance of the Governor’s directive, the 88th Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 1893, which prohibits the use of covered applications on governmental entity devices. As required by the Governor’s directive and Senate Bill 1893, this policy of the City of Eastland (the “City”) prohibits the installation or use of covered applications or prohibited technologies on applicable devices.

Commissioner Richard Rossander made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Carol Jones, to approve Resolution 2024-15 Implementing a Policy for Preventing Use of Prohibited Technology and Covered Applications.

Ayes: Commissioners Jones, Rossander, Vernon
Nays: None
Absent: Doyle, Stuart

5. Discussion and Consideration of awarding bid for demolition of property at 207 W. Patterson St.

City Manager Savannah Fortenberry advised the commission that the bid came in over budget and it also had conflicting statements in it.

Chairman Vernon recommended that a motion be made to decline this bid and for the City Manager to take the next appropriate steps.

Commissioner Richard Rossander made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Carol Jones, to decline the bid that was received.

Ayes: Commissioners Jones, Rossander, Vernon

Nays: None

Absent: Doyle, Stuart

6. Discussion and Consideration to approve the 2024 Contract with Eastland County for Dispatch Services.

City Manager Savannah Fortenberry stated the City of Eastland will pay the same amount as the last fiscal year.

Commissioner Carol Jones made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Richard Rossander, to approve the 2024 Contract with Eastland County for Dispatch Services.

Ayes: Commissioners Jones, Rossander, Vernon

Nays: None

Absent: Doyle, Stuart

7. Discussion and Consideration to approve the 2024 Contract with Eastland County for Firefighting Services.

City Manager Savannah Fortenberry stated the County of Eastland agrees to pay the City of Eastland the same amount as the last fiscal year for the Firefighting Services.

Commissioner Carol Jones made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Richard Rossander, to approve the 2024 Contract with Eastland County for Firefighting services

Ayes: Commissioners Jones, Rossander, Vernon

Nays: None

Absent: Doyle, Stuart

8. Discussion and Consideration of the U.S. Forest Service Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program through the U.S. Department of Agriculture for a Community Wildfire Implementation Project.

Chairman Vernon tabled this item.

9. Discussion and Consideration to revise the current City of Eastland websites.

City Manager Savannah Fortenberry stated that this is something the staff has been working on for a while and that there are some things happening that make this a good time to change websites. We have a quote from Munibit for \$1,908 per year but we get a three month discount the first year which makes it \$1,431.00 this year. Currently we pay TXOL \$3,000 per year.

She stated that after Munibit designs the website, control of it will be retained by the City of Eastland.

Commissioner Richard Rossander made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Carol Jones, to approve moving forward with the revision and implementation of a new city website.

Ayes: Commissioners Jones, Rossander, Vernon
Nays: None
Absent: Doyle, Stuart

VIII. City Manager Report

GLO-CDBG-MIT Project Planning

The street improvement project has moved forward and began October 14th on West Valley Street. Expected timeline is 18 months for completion. It is estimated that each street will take roughly a month from start to finish. There are two streets that are estimated to take two months, those are Moss and Patterson Street.

Attached is the map for the current order of streets to be repaired.

The bid packet for the south fork is complete and will go out for bid around November. This will allow for construction to take place in December through February.

TWDB Flood infrastructure Fund Grant

TWDB project is moving forward. Specialized Public Finance is working through the finance schedule to meet the November 18th deadline for Commission to authorize the issuance of the certificates to TWDB. Once completed, we will be waiting for the contract to be signed and fully executed by TWDB.

Downtown Sidewalk Repairs

Unknown timeframe.

DAM REPAIRS

Engineers from EH&T and HDR are beginning to work through different designs for Eastland Lake and Ringling Lake dams.

Content Manager Program

For Court, Finance, Code Enforcement, Permits

Computer configuration will be done in November.

Early December staff training on the program.

IX. Code Compliance Report

Planning and Zoning Director Tony Stubblefield reported the Code Compliance Report for September 2024. There were 55 open cases at the beginning of the month, 26 new cases were opened and 11 cases were closed, which ended the month with 70 cases open. 4 Citations were issued for tall weeds, junk vehicle, off street parking, parking in front or exterior side yard, Recreational vehicle use as living/sleeping quarters.

X. Police Chief Report

Chief Tim Pitts stated there were 342 calls for service in September. 15 cases were filed with the District Attorney and 2 cases filed with the Juvenile Authorities. There were 60 offense reports generated. He noted 17 arrests. A total of 551 traffic stops were initiated. This resulted in 367 warning citations and 184 citations issued. He also stated that 1025 “business checks” were conducted. Our Animal Control Officer had a very active month with 80 business calls. 17 animals were impounded and 6 were adopted and 2 were quarantined. 8 citations and 2 warnings were issued by the Animal Control Officer.

Chief Pitts noted there were 5 Narcotics Arrests; 8 arrest warrants served; 2 vehicle pursuits; 2 stolen vehicles recovered and 5 threats to the schools were investigated resulting in 3 criminal charges being filed.

Chief Pitts and Lt. McDade attended Active Shooter Training – Command and Control in Tyler, Texas.

Officer Rodriguez is in Phase 3 of his Field Training and it is going well.

XI. Fire Chief Report

Fire Chief Joe Williamson gave the following activity report for the month of September 2024 for the Volunteer and Paid Firefighters. Total call volume: 91 which was an average of 2.52 calls per day. 74 of these were in the City Limits and 16 of them were in the county and they responded to 1 call for mutual aid to other county fire departments. There were 12 incidents between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. There were no structure fires, 2 grass fires and 1 vehicle fire. They responded to 48 Medical calls, 7 Motor Vehicle accidents and 8 Public Service assists and 1 false alarm/investigation. We had 4 Haz-Mat incidents. Our volunteer membership is now 27 as we’ve accepted two new volunteers.

Chief Williamson spoke with a representative from TxDOT who informed him that the Traffic Control device is still on the schedule to be installed.

And finally, Chief Williamson gave an overview of the response to the Connellee Hotel fire on October 10, 2024. He thanked all of the area fire departments that responded. He stated that at one time there were a total of 62 firefighters in attendance. The fire itself did not do a lot of damage. Thankfully it did not get into the roof. But, the majority of damage to the Connellee was due to a valve on the standpipe being partially open on the 6th floor. This caused the water that should have been going to the 8th floor, where the fire was located, to shoot out onto the 6th floor. By the time this was discovered, a lot of water had been lost and it just drained down each remaining floor, causing extensive water damage. Thankfully, there was very little structure damage and the contents can be replaced.

City Manger Savannah Fortenberry stated that the Municipal Court has collected \$136,474 more than last year. This is due to the increased activity of the police department and the amazing efforts of our Municipal Court Clerk, Dena Withers. She has filed 2,268 new cases so far this year. She has been very busy.

XII. Adjournment

Commissioner Richard Rossander made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Carol Jones, to adjourn at 7:40 p.m.

APPROVED

Larry Vernon, Chairman
Board of City Commissioners

ATTEST

Roma Holley, City Secretary