

CITY OF ALAMO HEIGHTS
CITY COUNCIL
April 25, 2016

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Alamo Heights, Texas was held at Council Chambers, located at 6116 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas, at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, April 25, 2016.

Present and composing a quorum were:

Mayor Louis Cooper
Councilmember Lawson Jessee
Councilmember Bobby Rosenthal
Councilmember Fred Prassel
Councilmember John Savage

Also attending were:

City Manager J. Mark Browne
Fire Chief/Assistant City Manager Buddy Kuhn
Assistant to the City Manager Marian Vargas
City Attorney Mike Brenan
Finance Director Robert Galindo
Community Development Services Department Director Jason Lutz
Human Resource Manager Lori Harris
City Secretary Jennifer Reyna
Chief Police Rick Pruitt

Absent were:

Mayor Pro-Tempore Lynda Billa Burke
Public Works Director Pat Sullivan

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Mayor Louis Cooper opened the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

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Mayor Cooper announced that Item # 3b will be the first item presented.

Item # 3 Announcements

b. Recognition of Alamo Heights High School Girls Water Polo Team advancing to State Finals

Assistant to the City Manager Marian Vargas announced the Alamo Heights High School Girls Water Polo Team advanced to state finals. She invited the public to support

them on Friday, April 29th and April 30th at the Texas A&M Natatorium as they compete for the state title.

Mayor Cooper recognized and congratulated the team on their great accomplishment. He provided the players of the Girls Water Polo Team and Coaches Don Walker and Alberto Escalante a gold coin of the City to remember their achievement and moment.

Mayor Cooper announced Item # 1 would be considered next.

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Item # 1 Interview with citizens expressing an interest to serve on a City of Alamo Heights board or commission

Community Development Services Department Director Jason Lutz made a PowerPoint presentation that included background information on the various committees, nomination, and appointment process. There are two vacancies for the Board of Adjustment and one vacancy for the Architectural Review Board. He briefly introduced the candidates considered for nomination. Candidates provided a brief summary of their background and Council asked candidates questions about their experience and interests.

Mayor Cooper explained the process which include Mr. Lutz' input in what he is seeking and appointments will be made at a future meeting.

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Item # 2 Approval of Minutes

Mayor Cooper asked City Council for any revisions to the minutes of the March 28, 2016, City Council meeting. A motion was made by Councilmember Fred Prassel to approve the minutes of March 28, 2016. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Lawson Jessee and passed by unanimous vote.

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Item # 3 Announcements

Mayor Cooper read the following captions.

a. National Prescription Drug Take Back Program, April 30th

Police Chief Rick Pruitt announced that any expired, unused, and unwanted prescription drugs will be taken on Saturday, April 30, 2016 at City Hall beginning at 10:00 am. – 2:00 p.m. Police Officers will be present to take unwanted prescription

drugs. Police Chief Pruitt stated syringes, intravenous solutions, or injectables will not be accepted due to blood borne pathogen threats. Police Chief Pruitt stated he will send information via email blast to remind the community of this opportunity.

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Item # 4 Citizens to be heard concerning items not on the agenda

Margaret Houston, resident, complimented the Police Department for their presence in the streets. She commented on the dust that had surfaced since the breaking of the concrete at the trolley stop located at Broadway and Patterson.

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Items for Individual Consideration

Item # 5 Mayor Cooper read the following caption.

A Resolution approving and authorizing the City Manager to negotiate and execute a contract with Ferguson Enterprises, Inc., to purchase and install an Automated Meter Read (AMR) Water System and approving related financing as necessary for the payment of the AMR System

Finance Director Robert Galindo made a PowerPoint presentation that included background information.

Mr. Galindo reminded Council that SAWS terminated their meter reading services with the City in December 2013. SAWS extended their services until July 2016 to provide the City ample time to find a permanent solution. The solution process included a Request for Proposals in June 2015 in which no responses were received. After reviewing options and seeking a long-term solution, the City issued a RFP for Automated Meter Read (AMR) Water System in November 2015 since no responses were received for the water meter services RFP issued in June 2015. Six proposals were received for the RFP of AMR Water Meter system.

Mr. Galindo reviewed the evaluation process. The evaluation team recommended the proposal submitted by Ferguson Enterprises, Inc., which met all the requirements and provides the best value for the City. He stated references were contacted who provided favorable responses. He stated Ferguson Enterprises, Inc. offers Mueller Meters with Hot Rod registers. The Mueller Systems Route Management Software is compatible with the City's current utility billing system, Incode.

The AMR system, photos of the Mueller Meters, and Hot Rod registers were presented. Mr. Galindo briefly explained the process in how the signals are received and then obtained via a flash drive ready to download onto the computer system.

The financial impact was reviewed presenting a cost of \$910,942 with a 20% contingency of \$189,058 totaling \$1,100,000. Mr. Galindo informed Council of the option to finance the full amount at a current rate of 1.95% over a seven-year financing period or utilizing some of the Community Infrastructure & Economic Development (CIED) fund to offset the amount to be financed. A chart presented the financing amount, estimated annual payment and total costs. Mr. Galindo added the meters' lifetime is estimated at 15 years. He stated hiring three additional staff had been considered previously but noted it would be expensive and inefficient to maintain the additional staff as full-time employees.

Mayor Cooper explained that this option was considered due to the life of the current water meters. He stated there had been meetings and conversations regarding this matter. He recalled that previously the City was reading their own meters and noted it wasn't ideal. He asked Mr. Galindo if signals are transmitted continuously.

Mr. Galindo responded that signals are sent; however, are received during monthly reading only.

The following citizens spoke on this matter:

Debra Nason, President, Alamo Heights Neighborhood Association (AHNA), requested careful consideration from Council especially since it's a million dollar investment. She expressed concern on the lack of communication between the City and residents regarding consideration, installation, and timing. She asked if all options had been considered. She shared that the City of Austin is conducting an installation process over three phases.

Tom Patrick, resident, shared an article highlighted by CNN regarding the escalated water bills with installation of new water meters. He encouraged the need for careful oversight and recommended a private manager to view obstacles.

Margaret Houston, resident, expressed concern on the installation of automated meters due to increased water bills. She encouraged supervision during the installation process as she shared there was no supervision when the curb of the trolley stop was recently torn apart. Supervision is critical to the success of the program.

Julian Hall, resident, referenced prior PowerPoint presentation and expressed concern on the numbers, timing of installation, and the amount of time required to conduct residents' meter readings. He noted that the batteries of the water meters are non-replaceable with an estimated life of 10 years and an estimated cost on the replacement of meters was not provided.

John Joseph, resident, expressed concern on the frequency of public meetings and lack of public coordination. He asked why the need for three meter readers instead of one meter reader. He commented about the increased risks in making this purchase.

Tom Harmon, resident, reminded Council of the numerous lawsuits that had surfaced. He distributed to Council the case the Village of Tinley Park, Illinois is currently in.

Susan Straus, resident, commented on the issues that will surface due to water meter installation, for example, residents contesting their bills. She stated there is privacy intrusion due to water meter installations.

Elliot Weser, resident, inquired about the financing option for the purchase of AMRs. He urged Council to be smart on their decision and consider installation for a trial number to select within the City.

Bill Kiel, resident, recalled the purchase of water meters about 10 years ago and shared that Council decided to go with the San Antonio Water System (SAWS). He noted there had not been a water rate increase in 10 years. He suggested 500 water meters in a pilot program to test as he expressed support of new water meters.

Sylvia Wong, resident, expressed concern on the frequency signals and the lack of option to opt out. She suggested staff read the meters and Council delay voting on this item.

Dr. Joan Cunningham, resident, expressed support for a pilot program with samples within different areas of the City. She encouraged a public hearing for residents to have their questions answered and obtain information about the installation process. She shared that she lived in Charleston, South Carolina and noted there were no problems with smart meters; however, wanted to obtain information if there are existing problems within other cities. Dr. Cunningham commented that someone will still be needed to read the meters even if this option is selected.

Councilmember Fred Prassel commented that time is running out to make a final decision. He expressed concern on the possible increase on the number of employees for the City.

City Manager Mark Browne explained the rationale of having three additional employees focused on water meter reading. He stated one individual is not sufficient and could not accomplish the role in a specific time period. He commented it would be a challenge to maintain motivation for a part-time position.

Councilmember John Savage asked about the option of staggering bills within the month.

Mr. Galindo responded that in the past, the City of Alamo Heights did stagger bills; however, noted some cities are able to readings because they are large enough to have multiple billing cycles. Mr. Browne reminded Council of the one utility billing clerk the City has and there is no flexibility.

Mr. Browne stated that SAWS had already provided an extension and we would need to coordinate with SAWS again. He shared an operational test had been conducted on the meters. He stated the urgency that SAWS may not grant another extension due to multiple extension requests.

Mayor Cooper asked questions regarding a plan, pilot program, and battery life. He expressed concern with the clean-up process. He preferred to proceed at a slow pace and emphasized the need for the program to work to avoid issues. Mayor Cooper requested coordination with the homeowners.

Mr. Galindo responded to Mayor Cooper that he'd like to start negotiations and begin implementing through the end of October 2016. He stated there are two systems that will be in place. The first system allows SAWS to continue reading the current meters while the vendor installs new meters for a pilot program and then a smooth transition. He commented the process may be longer; however, anticipated to address issues prior to permanent installation. Mr. Browne added that a staff member will be with the vendor's crew during the installation. Assistant to the City Manager Marian Vargas stated that Ferguson conducts a thorough and complete clean-up process that is duly observed by their clients in other cities.

Councilmember Rosenthal commented the concerns are communicating with SAWS requesting to extend the water meter services and the possibility of other concerns such as increased water bills. Councilmember Rosenthal asked if the interest rate is fixed or an adjustable rate and if the vendor is involved in any litigation.

Mr. Browne stated the interest rate would be at a fixed rate. Ms. Vargas stated favorable responses were received on the vendor and that the vendor is not in any litigation.

Councilmember Lawson Jessee stated that taking the additional time will allow the City to address issues or concerns with the contractor and develop a contingency plan for issues that may surface. He expressed support for random sampling for a pilot program. Mr. Galindo shared information related to a contingency plan. Councilmember Jessee encouraged a contingency plan and commented to use the capital improvement fund.

Councilmember Rosenthal suggested a pilot program be considered and coordinate with SAWS for an additional extension of the water meter reads.

Council agreed to allow the City Manager to continue negotiation based on tonight's discussion and return for Council consideration. City Attorney Mike Brenan summarized that it would be fine to continue negotiation with Ferguson to address all concerns and obtain additional information based on expressed comments.

A motion was made by Councilmember Rosenthal to permit discussion with the contractor based on tonight's discussion. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Jessee and passed by unanimous vote.

Item # 6 Mayor Cooper read the following caption.

Discussion and possible action to approve concrete additions by TxDOT to the base of the "Trolley Stop" (VIA bus stop) at Broadway and Patterson" and update on other VIA construction projects in the City

City Manager Mark Browne introduced Abigail Rodriguez, Manager of Facility Programs, VIA, who made a PowerPoint presentation that included background information.

Ms. Rodriguez shared that within the City there are 6 bus routes, 16 bus shelters and 46 bus stops. She informed Council that money had been received by the Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to make improvements including construction of sidewalks, landing pads, ramps and other pedestrian related improvements.

Ms. Rodriguez stated VIA is making improvements along Broadway and Austin Highway to include construction of two new shelters on Austin Highway. She highlighted a new bus route, referred to as the cultural route, in which the final destination is at the McNay Museum. VIA & TxDOT are seeking to provide Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements and conduct additional work around the trolley stop. She stated bus stop 88167 (historic trolley stop) recently had new ramps provided on the southern end. A map was presented that identified the trolley stop and construction area.

Ms. Rodriguez introduced Lizette Colbert, representative from the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), South Region.

City Manager Mark Browne asked Ms. Rodriguez if the proposed construction lane would be modified to allow 18 wheelers to pass and expressed concern about the width of the lane and issues on the Broadway side.

Ms. Lizette Colbert explained the lane allows turns and passage for 18 wheelers. She stated there will be no difficulty with the modified plan. She referenced the map and briefly spoke of the raised pavement profile. She stated the items expressed at a previous meeting had been addressed. She summarized that striping will be used during construction.

Ms. Rodriguez stated the project will start in August 2016. She added the contractor will coordinate with respective corridors, one at a time.

Mayor Cooper stated the trolley stop is a national historic bus stop and asked Ms. Colbert to share with the contractors of the historical designation and express caution while working. He also asked Ms. Colbert to communicate with Public Works Director Pat Sullivan to inform him when construction will begin and provide him a briefing.

Ms. Lizette Colbert agreed to Mayor Cooper's requests to contact Mr. Sullivan to provide him a briefing and inform him when construction will begin. She stated a caution sign will be placed around the trolley stop.

Councilmember Jessee inquired about dust control. Mr. Browne responded to Councilmember Jessee that communication is warranted when a complaint is received.

Council thanked Ms. Rodriguez and Ms. Colbert for their time and listening to their requests.

Item # 7 Mayor Cooper read the following caption.

ORDINANCE NO. 2049

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 18, TRAFFIC, OF
THE CODE OF ORDINANCES, ARTICLE V, DIVISION 1,
SECTIONS 18-101 AND 18-103 PERTAINING TO
OVERNIGHT PARKING**

Police Chief Rick Pruitt made a PowerPoint presentation that included background information.

Police Chief Pruitt reminded Council that proposed changes to overnight parking on public streets were provided January 26, 2016. He highlighted the changes proposed in Article V, Sections 18-101 and 18-103 which included the definition of "Vehicle", that overnight parking permits are restricted to passenger cars, vans and light-duty trucks having a manufacturer rated carrying capacity of one ton or less; persons qualifying under this section and only needing a short-term permit not exceeding three days may be issued a short-term permit by contacting the police administrative office or the police/fire dispatch center in person or by telephone.

A motion for approval was made by Councilmember Jessee. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Prassel and passed by unanimous vote.

Item # 8 Mayor Cooper read the following caption.

**Consideration of a Resolution supporting the Appointment of a
Mayor from the Greater Bexar County Council of Cities to the San
Antonio Water Systems (SAWS) Board of Trustees**

Mayor Cooper announced that Item # 8 was pulled from the agenda.

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There being no further business, a motion was made by Councilmember Prassel to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Jessee and passed by unanimous vote. Mayor Cooper adjourned the meeting at 7:03 p.m.



Jennifer Reyna
City Secretary



Louis Cooper
Mayor