

CITY OF ALAMO HEIGHTS  
CITY COUNCIL  
August 25, 2025

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Alamo Heights, Texas was held at the Council Chamber, located at 6116 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas, at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, August 25, 2025. A teleconference was held via Zoom; staff and meeting attendees were welcomed in the Council Chamber.

Composing a quorum were:

Mayor Albert Honigblum  
Mayor Pro Tem Trey Jacobson  
Councilmember Lawson Jessee  
Councilmember Karl P. Baker  
Councilmember Lynda Billa Burke

Also attending were:

City Manager Buddy Kuhn  
City Attorney Jessie Lopez  
Assistant City Manager Phillip Laney  
Assistant to City Manager Jennifer Reyna  
City Secretary Elsa T. Robles  
Finance Director Kristine Horton  
Police Chief Rick Pruitt  
Fire Chief Allen Ottmers  
Public Works Director Frank Orta

Not attending:

Councilmember Blake M. Bonner  
Community Development Services Director Lety Hernandez  
Deputy Police Chief Cindy Pruitt

\* \* \*

Mayor Albert Honigblum opened the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

\* \* \*

*Item # 1      Approval of Minutes*

Mayor Honigblum asked the City Council for a motion on the August 11, 2025 City Council meeting minutes. Councilmember Karl P. Baker requested to strike/eliminate a comment in the minutes. Councilmember Lynda Billa Burke moved to approve the minutes with modifications. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Lawson Jessee and passed by a 4-0 vote.

Mayor Honigblum asked the City Council for a motion on the August 12, 2025 Special City Council meeting minutes. Mayor Pro Tem Trey Jacobson moved to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Jessee and passed by a 4-0 vote.

\* \* \*

*Item # 2      Citizens to be Heard*

Mr. Ron Tietz, resident, stated he had concerns with people walking in neighborhoods at night with no reflective gear or lights. He added this was a safety issue and requested the city inform residents to take better precautions when walking at night. He also shared concerns with traffic lights on Broadway, particularly in front of the high school and suggested they be synchronized so that traffic can flow better.

\* \* \*

*Mayor Honigblum requested to hear Item # 8 first.*

\* \* \*

*Staff Reports*

*Item # 8      Mayor Honigblum read the following caption.*

**Staff report on the Alamo Heights Pool Pocket Park project.**

Assistant City Manager Phillip Laney introduced Mr. Nathan Perez of Ford Powell & Carson (FPC) Architects who provided Council an update on the Alamo Heights pool pocket park project. He reviewed the overall updated plan to include area scope and improvements. He noted the location of restroom facilities, play area, pavilion, pool facilities, parking, and proposed signage location. Mr. Perez provided renderings of proposed facilities and materials. FPC suggests a wire mesh fencing that can be used for in landscaping to grow vines, etc. and soften the edge. He noted other proposed materials such as synthetic lawn and plant design materials.

Councilmember Jessee discussed the proposed playground area and noted it was big enough for kids to be able to play ball and run around. It was designed to cater to younger kids ages 4-12. He commented the artificial turf will be located under the tumble hill and under the trees because it may get too hot for the play area.

Mayor Honigblum thanked Councilmember Jessee for his efforts & vision and FPC for listening to Council's concerns and requests.

Councilmember Baker asked for clarification on the grill kitchen scope and how it would tie into the pocket park. Mr. Perez described the location and proposed layout. Councilmember Baker requested data on provided shading throughout the day in the area.

Council briefly discussed proposed irrigation/well, tree options for the park, and pavilion location. They thanked Mr. Perez and FPC for their work on this project.

\* \* \*

*Mayor Honigblum requested to discuss and consider Items # 5 – 7 before Items # 3 – 4.*

\* \* \*

Items for Individual Consideration

*Item # 5* Mayor Honigblum read the following caption.

**Public hearing on Proposed FY 2025-2026 Annual Operating Budget**

Mayor Honigblum opened the public hearing at 6:18 p.m. With no one to speak on the item, Mayor Honigblum closed the public hearing at 6:19 p.m.

*Item # 6* Mayor Honigblum read the following caption.

**Public hearing on 2025 Proposed Ad Valorem Tax Rate**

Mayor Honigblum opened the public hearing at 6:20 p.m. With no one to speak on the item, Mayor Honigblum closed the public hearing at 6:21 p.m.

*Item # 7* Mayor Honigblum read the following caption.

**Budget and Tax Ordinances to be considered in the following order:**

**a. FY 2025-2026 Operating Budget**

**ORDINANCE NO. 2244**

**AN ORDINANCE MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE VARIOUS FUNDS AND PURPOSES OF SUCH BUDGET AND ADOPTING A BUDGET FOR OPERATING THE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT OF THE CITY OF ALAMO HEIGHTS INCLUDING APPROPRIATIONS OF MONEY TO PAY INTEREST AND PRINCIPAL SINKING FUND REQUIREMENTS ON ALL INDEBTEDNESS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 2025 AND ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2026; AND PROVIDING A SAVINGS AND SEVERABILITY CLAUSE; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES AND APPROPRIATIONS IN CONFLICT WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ORDINANCE; AND ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

**b. 2025 Ad Valorem Tax Rate**

**ORDINANCE NO. 2245**

**AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING A TAX RATE AND LEVYING AN AD VALOREM TAX UPON ALL PROPERTY SUBJECT TO TAXATION AT THE RATE OF \$0.370147 FOR EVERY \$100.00 VALUATION FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE CITY GOVERNMENT OF THE CITY OF ALAMO HEIGHTS, TEXAS, SPECIFYING SEPARATE COMPONENTS OF SUCH RATE FOR MAINTENANCE**

**AND OPERATIONS AND FOR DEBT SERVICE; SAID TAXES BEING LEVIED FOR THE 2025 TAX YEAR; PROVIDING FOR DUE AND DELINQUENT DATES TOGETHER WITH PENALTIES AND INTEREST; PROVIDING FOR COLLECTION AND ORDAINING OTHER RELATED MATTERS; AND SETTING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

- c. Ratifying the Increase in Property Tax Revenue reflected in the FY 2025-2026 Budget**

**ORDINANCE NO. 2246**

**AN ORDINANCE RATIFYING THE PROPERTY TAX REVENUE INCREASE REFLECTED IN THE FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 BUDGET AND SETTING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

Mr. Laney thanked Council for communicating their vision for the community and providing direction for staff to put together a balanced budget for FY 2025-2026. He stated he and Finance Director Kristine Horton would be presenting the budget and tax items for consideration.

Ms. Horton presented the proposed 2025 Tax Rate. The proposed 2025 total tax rate is \$0.370147 per \$100 valuation. Ms. Horton noted the No New Revenue Tax Rate is \$0.367873 and the Voter Approval Rate is \$0.475767. The tax rate is composed of two components: Maintenance and Operation (M&O) rate of \$0.307576 and Interest and Sinking (I&S) rate of \$0.062571. She noted staff utilize funds from debt service to lower the INS rate and increase the M&O rate. If Council adopts the proposed tax rate, it will raise an additional \$170,895 compared to the no new revenue rate.

Mr. Laney reviewed the summary of the proposed General Fund Budget for FY 2025-2026. The beginning fund balance is approximately \$7.8M, estimated operating revenues are \$14.6M, departmental allocations total \$14.8M, leaving a projected remaining balance of \$7,584,649. He explained the operating revenues estimates changed since staff presented the proposed budget to Council. The change was due to Council's recommendation to increase the solid waste fees. He reviewed the proposed increase.

<b>FY 2026 Solid Waste Fee</b> (Residential & MF / Commercial)	<b>Projected Fee Revenues</b>	<b>FY 2026 Operating Expenses<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>% Expenses Pd by Fees</b>
<b>\$29/\$45 Fee</b>	<b>\$1,034,832</b>	<b>\$1,021,670</b>	<b>\$13,162</b>	<b>101.3%</b>

1) Adopted FY 2026 Budget expenditures total \$1,171,670, which includes \$150,000 one-time purchase of garbage cans

The solid waste fee increase supports the current pick-up frequency and schedule which is twice a week for garbage (M/Th or Tue/Fr) & once a week for recycling (Wed); an approximate cost of \$2.42 per pick-up. The proposed budget includes a one-time purchase of garbage cans for each solid waste customer account, or one (1) 96-gallon City-issued garbage can for each account. If a resident desires an additional can(s), they will assume actual cost per can requested. Staff proposes 50% of monthly charge for additional cans (FY26 - \$14.50 & \$22.50/can).

Mr. Laney reviewed the proposed Utility Fund budget. He stated the city has been using the fund balance to pay for all Capital Improvements to the city's water system and noted staff is anticipating the use of reserves to help pay for improvements next year. Staff has also discussed the need for debt issuance in the near future. Mr. Laney stated the beginning utility fund balance of \$2.1M does not include the projected \$544,023 in reserves collected from the Drought Surcharge Fee.

Other proposed governmental funds for FY 2025-2026 are the Comprehensive Plan Fund with a beginning balance of \$2.2M including expenditures of \$3.3M for the city's beautification project and \$209,000 that are allocated for the Community Grant Program, New Park Design, studies for Park Sustainability, AH Blvd and community events. The Street Maintenance Fund revenues are estimated at \$865,000 from dedicated ½ cent sales tax revenue and expenditures are \$1.2M for the street maintenance program and alley maintenance. The Capital Projects Funds beginning balance is \$16.7M which includes the 2021 Taxable bond proceeds of \$13,250,000 plus earned interest. The Capital Replacement Fund starting balance is \$1.2M with a revenue of \$285,900 and expenditures of \$1.3M which includes \$1.0M Beautification swap; additional \$217,900 total transfer for EMS \$143,000, Police Cameras \$60,400, and IT \$14,500.

Mr. Laney stated the City Charter requires the City Manager to prepare a budget to cover all proposed expenditures of the City for the succeeding year. The budget must be prepared in conformity with state law and a vote to approve is required. A roll call record vote to set the tax rate is required by Chapter 26 of the Tax Code. Local Government Code 102.007 requires a separate vote to ratify the property tax revenue increase in the budget.

In closing, Mr. Laney acknowledged Mayor Honigblum and members of the City Council for providing their support and trust these past few months throughout the budget development process. He noted it had been a tough year with the unexpected loss of Finance Director Robert Galindo and others who experienced significant tragedies. Staff worked together to continue providing the service the community expects. Mr. Laney stated management is proud of the organization, its leadership, and each member of the work family. He thanked the department directors and everyone who came together to help figure out the budget process for the city.

Mayor Honigblum took the opportunity to thank staff on behalf of City Council for their thoughtfulness and diligence throughout this difficult process.

Council briefly discussed the rollout of the new city issued garbage cans. Council shared concerns regarding additional cans or the use of recycling cans for garbage collection.

Public Works Director Frank Orta commented staff will tag recycling bins that have garbage in them and refuse to pick it up because the contents will be rejected at the recycling plant. Staff will take the initiative to speak to the resident and explain why it was not picked up. Mr. Orta explained a few extra cans will be purchased for those who desire an additional can.

City Manager Buddy Kuhn shared the proposed budget included the increase in solid waste fees as requested by City Council, \$29 residential & \$45 MF/commercial; however, it did not include the proposed additional 50% of monthly charge for additional cans (FY26 - \$14.50 & \$22.50/can) which could be discussed further if Council preferred.

Mayor Honigblum asked the City Attorney Jessie Lopez if initiative warranted an ordinance to help facilitate the transition from private garbage cans to city owned. Mr. Lopez commented City Council could establish a policy to set terms for solid waste collection and city issued bins.

Councilmember Jessee suggested staff provide a follow-up report on the proposed garbage bin rollout. Mr. Kuhn shared staff had been working diligently on this project, but agreed the implementation needed to be buttoned up and communicated effectively to the public.

Mr. Kuhn stated the Texas Legislature was in the midst of a special session in which one of the items focuses on lowering the revenue multiplier in the voter-approval property tax rate calculation from 3.5% to 1% for all Texas cities, regardless of population. He asked Ms. Horton to calculate what that would look like if it would have been passed this year and it would mean the city would have \$133,000 less in revenue. Council discussed contacting Senator Campbell and Representative LaHood to ask them to leave it at the current rate of 3.5%.

Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson moved to approve Ordinance No. 2244 adopting the annual operating budget of the City of Alamo Heights for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2025 and ending September 30, 2026. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Jessee and passed by roll call vote as follows: Ayes – Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson, Councilmember Jessee, Councilmember Baker, and Councilmember Billa Burke. Nays – None. Present but not voting – Mayor Honigblum.

Councilmember Jessee moved to approve Ordinance No. 2245 stating the property tax rate be increased by the adoption of a tax rate of \$0.370147 per \$100 valuation, which is effectively a 0.618 percent increase in the tax rate with the M&O Rate being \$0.307576 and the I&S Rate being \$0.062571. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Billa Burke and passed by roll call vote as follow: Ayes – Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson, Councilmember Jessee, Councilmember Baker, and Councilmember Billa Burke. Nays – None. Present but not voting – Mayor Honigblum.

Councilmember Jessee moved to approve Ordinance No. 2246 ratifying the increase in Property Tax reflected in the FY 2025-2026 Budget. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson and passed by roll call vote as follow: Ayes – Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson, Councilmember Jessee, Councilmember Baker, and Councilmember Billa Burke. Nays – None. Present but not voting – Mayor Honigblum.

*Item # 3* Mayor Honigblum read the following caption.

**Public Hearing. Concerning an ordinance amending Chapter 5, Building and Building Regulations, by adding Article XII. – Residential Haunted Houses to the City's Code of Ordinances**

Mr. Laney stated this is an amendment to the City Code dealing with residential haunted houses and would enact regulations for temporary non-commercial haunted houses in residential areas. This action would provide some rules and regulations, to ensure these residential haunted houses can proceed to celebrate Halloween in a safe manner under certain rules and regulations.

Mr. Laney provided background information and stated in October 2024; a private residence located at 308 Argo was granted a one-time variance with conditions from the City Code to construct and operate a haunted house. These conditions were that all liability and safety risks were assumed by the applicant/owner and staff would conduct a pre-event safety inspection and a fire watch during the event. After the event, a committee reviewed the code requirements and processes to address future requests for haunted houses or other temporary accessory structures in residential areas.

Staff worked with Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson and the City Manager to develop some proposed updates to require full code compliance for these types of temporary accessory structures. The recommendations were to abide by the International Fire & Building Codes and the Zoning code, adopted by the City. Additionally, recommendations were made to provide administrative updates to the special event permit application.

Mr. Laney noted additional feedback from City Council has focused on ensuring safety, minimizing risk, and making operations possible for the proposed haunted houses while abiding by certain conditions set forth by the City. He explained if adopted, Article XII. – Residential Haunted Houses to Chapter 5 Buildings and Building Regulations would be added to the building and building regulation section of the code. He identified requirements to be included in the amendment pertaining to the permit requirements. A permit is required for temporary enclosed structures, with occupancy of 5 to 20 people, the use of special effects, and open to general public. A permit is required but may not have to fulfill all listed regulations if the occupancy is less than 5 people, the structure is less than 120 sq ft, not enclosed, and is part of an existing residential building. Mr. Laney noted, the amendment does not apply to haunted houses that are charging fees or part of a commercial establishment.

Mr. Laney continued with the application procedure and stated a special event permit application is required at least 30 days before construction begins. The applicant will require neighbor support from all adjoining neighbors and 80% of the surrounding area (same blockface). A safety and site plan is also required as well as a signed waiver or indemnification of City liability where the applicant will assume liability for any mishaps.

Other amendments to the code are safety standards which include:

- Egress – 2 clearly marked exits
- Occupancy – no more than 20 people at a time
- Fire safety – no open flames; AHFD fire watch
- Electrical safety – no overloaded circuits, electrical cords
- Structural stability safety – must withstand 20mph sustained winds and/or 30mph gusts, engineer's letter, stop work order
- Setbacks – 3 from all property lines; must be on private property
- Supervision – at least 2 adults present, communication
- Inspections – Fire Marshal

Mr. Laney reviewed structure construction and use timeline. He stated construction of the haunted house could begin no sooner than 60 days from October 31st and after the Special Event Permit is issued. The exterior enclosure cannot occur no sooner than 30 days from October 31st. The haunted house operations are limited to October 31st or a replacement date; however, all structures must be dismantled and removed within 2 weeks following Halloween. He added the

Fire Marshal is responsible to ensure compliance of all regulations and retains the right to immediately pause, stop, or cancel construction or operations.

State law authorizes cities to adopt provisions to address structures and ensure public health, safety and welfare is preserved. Incorporating the application process, regulations, and enforcement tools provides options to minimize risk. Additionally, this helps to safeguard the public's health, safety, and general welfare while enabling community engagement/enjoyment.

Mr. Laney stated Fire and Community Development staff had coordinated with Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson, Councilmember Jessee, the City Attorney, and City Manager. He added if adopted, the ordinance would have no fiscal impact on the city.

Council discussed having a standardized form or email to request neighborhood support for the haunted house. Councilmember Jessee stated the interested applicant had concerns with the number of support signatures that had to be gathered. Council and staff discussed options for this requirement.

Councilmember Baker suggested insurance liability be included in the process along with the indemnity to avoid risk to the city. After a lengthy discussion, Council agreed to make some modifications to the amendment.

Mayor Honigblum opened the public hearing at 7:27 p.m. With no one to speak on the item, he closed the public hearing at 7:28 p.m.

*Item # 4* Mayor Honigblum read the following caption.

**ORDINANCE NO. 2243**

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ALAMO HEIGHTS, TEXAS, AMENDING CHAPTER 5 BUILDINGS AND BUILDING REGULATIONS BY ADDING ARTICLE XII RESIDENTIAL HAUNTED HOUSES TO ENACT REGULATIONS FOR RESIDENTIAL, NON-COMMERCIAL, TEMPORARY STRUCTURES USED FOR HAUNTED HOUSES; PROVIDING FOR REPEALER AND SAVINGS; PROVIDING A PENALTY; ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

After further discussion, Councilmember Baker moved to approve Ordinance No. 2243 with modifications to include written support of at least 75% of occupied adjacent property owners consisting of owners of occupied property located within 200 feet on the same side of the proposed haunted house location and owners of occupied property located within 200 feet across the street facing of the proposed haunted house location. In addition, applicants must submit proof of insurance in type and amount satisfactory to the City Manager or their designee. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Jessee and passed by a 4-0 vote.

\*

\*

\*


With no further business to consider, Councilmember Jessee moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:48 p.m. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Jacobson and passed by 4-0 vote.



**PASSED AND APPROVED THIS 08<sup>th</sup> DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2025.**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Elsa T. Robles, TRMC  
City Secretary



  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Albert Honigblum  
Mayor