



**MINUTES
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
August 27, 2009
7:00 p.m.**

The City Council of the City of Forest Hill met on the above date at 7:02 p.m. with Mayor James Gosey presiding. The following Council Members and officials were present: Council Members Damian Dalcour, Lyndia Thomas, Gerald Joubert, Dulani Masimini, Mayor Pro Tem Mustafa Sami, City Manager David Miller, City Secretary Debra Maness, Acting Public Works Director Roberto Duenes, Interim Police Chief Robert Herbert, Economic Development and Community Relations Director Venus Wehle, Finance Director Clifford Blackwell, III. Council Member Andrew Sanders – absent.

Opening Agenda:

A. Call to Order

With a quorum present, Mayor Gosey called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

B. Invocation

Invocation was delivered by Coach Jimmie L. Sanders.

C. Pledge of Allegiance to Flags

Pledge to the United States and Texas flags were recited.

D. Public Hearing:

1. Hold a Public Hearing on the City of Forest Hill proposed budget. This public hearing is being held for citizen input on the proposed budget for Fiscal Year October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010.

Mayor Gosey opened the public hearing at 7:05 p.m.

Dave Gainer, 3513 Lon Stephenson, Forest Hill, spoke before the Council, thanked the council and staff for their diligent work with putting together the budget. He handed out a spreadsheet, comparing Forest Hill's budget to a neighboring city (not named) budget. He also requested that the Council to revisit their gas drilling ordinance, so that additional drilling would be able to take place in Forest Hill

Loretta J. Muldrew, 3300 Valley Forge Trail, Forest Hill, spoke before the Council and informed the public that the reason there was not drilling going on in Forest Hill is because Glen Crest.

Clifford Blackwell, Finance Director informed the public that the first item was on the budget, the main focus is the General Fund, simply because it has the greatest impact on the City.

With no one else to speak, Mayor Gosey closed the public hearing at 7:22 p.m.

2. Second public hearing to receive citizens comments on a proposal to increase total tax revenues from properties on the tax roll in the preceding tax year by 1.17 percent. Your individual taxes may increase a greater or lesser rate or even decrease, depending on the change in the taxable value of your property in relations to the change in taxable value of all other property and the tax rate that is adopted.

Mayor Gosey opened the public hearing at 7:23 p.m.

Clifford Blackwell, Finance Director informed the public that this was the second hearing on the proposed tax rate. He stated that Forest Hill's appraised taxable value had declined by 9%. According to Tarrant County Appraisal District the average home was \$63,988 and the average value has decreased by \$53,678. He stated that while the tax rate may be higher, your taxes paid to the City could still be lower for fiscal year 2009-2010, due to appraisal values going down. The proposed tax rate at this time is \$1.06 per 100 value. He also informed the public that the Council would be voting on the tax rate September 8, 2009.

Loretta J. Muldrew, 3300 Valley Forge Trail, Forest Hill, Ms. Muldrew wanted to know if the citizens have a choice whether we allow this proposal to go through. She also wanted to know if the citizens would vote on this. She does not want the tax rate increased.

Mayor Gosey explained that the Council votes on the tax rate, but the public hearing is to get the citizens input.

Jimmie L. Sanders, 7005 Stonewall, Forest Hill, stated that he has lived in Forest Hill for thirty-two years. Stated that he did not want to lay any one off, but did not want to raise taxes.

City Manager thanked the citizens for being here and explained to the public that Forest Hill is cutting 8.5 positions. He informed the citizens that we are not talking about raising the taxes to \$1.06 and leaving it there.

Elmo Manning, 6717 Robindale, Forest Hill, stated that he has lived in Forest Hill 30 years. He stated that he does not feel that the Council should be the one to vote on the tax rate, but the citizens should have the right to vote. When asked by Council Masimini and Mayor Gosey if he was in favor of raising the tax, Mr. Manning stated that he did not have enough information to make that decision.

Council Member Masimini explained to Mr. Manning that it is the Council's responsibility to vote on the tax rate, and the purpose of the public hearing is to receive input from the citizens on how they feel about the tax rate.

Mayor Pro Tem Sami thanked the citizens for their input. He informed the citizens that one of the things that he looked at was public safety. He also stated that most of the residents would see a decrease in the amount of taxes they pay.

Pearl Barnett, 6605 Robindale Road, Forest Hill, stated that she understand with the economy why

the City does not want to lay anyone off. She also asked would the City be able to use the money collected from the hotels. She would like the Council to put off raising the taxes.

Clifford Blackwell, Finance Director informed the citizens that state law dictates when the tax rate needs to be adopted. He also informed the citizens that the State dictates how the sales tax money received from hotels can be used.

Dave Gainer, 3513 Lon Stephenson, Forest Hill, questioned the line item of taxes, how can we increase the revenue in taxes paid and decrease the amount of money citizens pay on property taxes.

Clifford Blackwell, Finance Director explained in the taxes line item, it includes the amount received from sales tax and franchise tax as well as property taxes.

Loretta J. Muldrew, 3300 Valley Forge Trail, Forest Hill, stated that she did not understand why the citizens did not know about this before now.

Clifford Blackwell, Finance Director explained that the City posts notices for these meetings, posts notices for workshops, put it on the website and publishes it in the paper. The Connect CTY was a courtesy. The City does a due diligent in informing the citizen. The citizen has the right to come to the meetings and ask questions.

James Overton, 6520 Royal Oaks Drive, Forest Hill, stated that he was on the Council for 9 years and sometimes there would no one at the meeting except the Council. He feels that citizens should come at least once a month to a meeting so that they would be informed on what is going on in the City. He stated that he was in favor of the budget and the tax rate.

Council Member Dalcour was excused from the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Allen Flennoy, 6928 Shenandoah, Forest Hill, stated that he is an employee that lives in the City and works for the City. He loves the city and works hard to make the City to look good and gain the trust of the citizens. He is in favor of the tax increase.

Pearl Barnett, 6605 Robindale Road, Forest Hill, stated if you look around her neighborhood there are several empty houses. She stated that the citizens are unaware of the crime rate because it is not published in the newspaper any longer and would like to see it again. Also, wanted to know what type of businesses the City was trying to get to come into the City.

David Miller, City Manager, explained that the empty houses are a problem. They effect the property value and that EDC is actively recruiting a mixture of business that would help with the property tax and sales tax.

Mayor Gosey stated that he wanted to hear from Meto Metiff before he left.

Meto Metiff, 4453 Crestmont Road, Fort Worth, informed the Council that he has a lot of concerns about the budget, he feels that are a lot expenditures in the budget that are not necessary. The city has been spending money on capital improvements for the last year or two years and spending money on Economic Development trying to develop the 92 acres. He is the biggest tax payer in

this city and his taxes are increasing by 25%. His property value has not decreased. He stated that other cities were not raising taxes; they were tightening their belts and cutting salaries. He is not sure how much the tax rate should be.

Gene Pirtle, 6106 Guilford, Forest Hill, stated that he has lived in Forest Hill almost 40 years. He feels that the Council has worked hard and he is going to trust Council to reduce the tax rates when times get better. He does not want any services cut. He is in favor of the tax increase.

Jerline Harvey, 3300 Old Hickory Trail, Forest Hill, stated she understood that we all have a budget crunch. A tax increase may not be much for the average citizen, but it is a lot for Mr. Metiff. He is developing the Rose Crest Addition and was wondering how he was going to be able to sell the lots with the high tax. These new homes would increase the population. He has also donated land for a multi purpose recreational center. She is not for the tax increase.

Mayor Gosey stated that if things do not get better, the Council would not come back with another tax rate increase; there would be major changes in the city services.

Council Member Masimini stated that the City Manager has a year to make the City more efficient. We can not afford to continue to do business as done in the past. Everyone on the staff knows that if additional revenues do not come in there will be cuts. The employees are going to be effective and efficient.

Council Member Thomas stated that the Council had requested that the budget be looked at with at 3% across the board decrease in salaries. She also stated that since we are already working short staff and the citizens need to get involved in the City.

Council Member Joubert stated that the Council had worked hard on the budget and had considered the citizens of Forest Hill. There has been a great improvement in City in the last three years. The City has employees that want to work here.

With no one else to speak, Mayor Gosey closed the public hearing at 8:43 p.m.

E. Consent Agenda: - All consent agenda items listed are considered to be routine by the City Council and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Council Member so requests, in which event, the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered in its normal sequence on the agenda.

3. Consider contract for collection of delinquent municipal court fines and fees with McCreary, Veselka, Bragg and Allen, P.C.

Council Member Masimini requested that this item be removed from the consent agenda and placed under the deliberation agenda.

F. Deliberation Agenda

3. Consider contract for collection of delinquent municipal court fines and fees with McCreary, Veselka, Bragg and Allen, P.C.

Council Member Masimini asked if we were able to get the 25% minority requirement in the contract. Finance Director, Clifford Blackwell informed him that we were not able to get this in

the contract.

Mr. Whigham of McCreary, Veselka, Bragg and Allen, P.C., informed the council that all of their printing and mailing is performed by a HUB. He stated that he would be able to provide the percentage of diversity in his company.

Mayor Pro Tem made the motion to accept the contract with exhibit to be attached. Motion died due to lack of a second.

Council Member Masimini made a motion to table this item until September 8 with an exhibit to the contract that states the company’s minority disclosures. Motion was seconded by Council Member Thomas, which **passed** as follows:

Ayes: Council Members Thomas, Joubert, Masimini, Mayor Pro Tem Sami and Mayor Gosey

Nays: None

Absent: Council Members Dalcour and Sanders.

4. Discuss and consider any action, if necessary, in relation to the proposed City of Forest Hill Budget for Fiscal Year 2009-2010 to change by adding or deleting items to the proposed budget prior to formal adoption September 8, 2009.

No action was taken on this item.

5. Discuss and consider moving Regular Council meeting for September 1, 2009 to Special Council meeting to be held September 8, 2009.

Council Member Masimini made the motion to move the Regular Council meeting for September 1, 2009 to Special Council meeting to be held September 8, 2009. Motion was seconded by Council Member Thomas, which **passed** as follows:

Ayes: Council Members Thomas, Joubert, Masimini, Mayor Pro Tem Sami and Mayor Gosey

Nays: None

Absent: Council Members Dalcour and Sanders.

G. Adjournment

With no further business to discuss meeting was adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

Debra W. Maness, City Secretary

James Gosey, Mayor