



**1111 Bayou Road  
La Marque, Texas  
409-938-9202**

**CITY OF LA MARQUE  
CITY COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING  
of  
FEBRUARY 17, 2022**

Minutes of a City Council Special Meeting held in the Council Chambers, 1109 Bayou Road, La Marque, Texas as well as via teleconference - ZOOM and via YouTube. The council will meet for the purpose of considering the following agenda:

**(1) CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Mayor Bell called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

**(2) ROLL CALL**

Keith Bell	Mayor
Kimberley Yancy	Councilmember District A
Joe Compian	Mayor-Pro-Tem District B
Michael Carlson	Councilmember District C
Casey Mc Auliffe	Councilmember District D (4101 Main St. La Marque, TX 77568)

**STAFF:**

Randall Aragon	Interim City Manger
Gus Knebel	Consulting City Attorney
Kierra Nance	City Clerk

**(3) INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Bell led the invocation and Mayor Pro Tem Compian led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**(4) CITIZENS PARTICIPATION (Limited to three minutes per person)**

Comments from the public will be heard at this time. Any person with city-related business who has signed up may speak to Council on a specific agenda item (limited to three (3) minutes) should give the Mayor your name and the item you wish to speak about. In compliance with Texas Open Meeting Act, the City may not deliberate on comments. Personal attacks will not be allowed, and personnel matters should be addressed to the City Manager during normal business hours. **Press \*6 to mute or unmute if you are participating by telephone, press the unmute button if attending via zoom on a smartphone, tablet, or computer, or stand if attending in person, and the Mayor will call on you in turn.**

There was no citizens participation.

\*\* Mayor Bell closed the Special meeting at 6:06 p.m.

## (5) PUBLIC HEARING

- a. Conduct Public Hearing to hear input regarding adopting Ordinance No. O-2022-0002, calling a bond election to be held within the City of La Marque, making provisions for the conduct and the giving of notice of the election and containing other provisions relating thereto - Legal J. Frels

\*\* Mayor Bell opened the Public Hearing at 6:07 p.m.

Laura Divine (1406 Merry Lane) she thanked Mayor and Council for the consideration of the Bond issue and recalled the difficult process of passing a bond at College of the Mainland. She spoke to how desperately a new Police Station is needed. However, she does not believe that the people of the City can get behind this bond. Fourteen (14) million dollars is a lot of money. Recommended getting the number down to possibly (8) million. She stated that she will do whatever she needs to do to help get this bond passed once a reasonable amount is assessed.

\*\* Mayor Bell closed the Public Hearing at 6:11 p.m.

\*\* Mayor Bell reconvened the Special Meeting at 6:12 p.m.

## (6) NEW BUSINESS

- a. Discussion/ possible action regarding adopting Ordinance No. O-2022-0002, calling a bond election to be held within the City of La Marque, making provisions for the conduct and the giving of notice of the election and containing other provisions relating thereto - Legal J. Frels

\*\* *This item was discussed after Executive Session*

Council addressed that this item needs more time and should include the department as well as the community in order to receive all of what is needed without causing overdue burden to the taxpayers.

Mayor and other members pledged their commitment to a new police station. Mayor announced that instead of utilizing a General Bond the City will be utilizing Certificates of Obligation, citing the flexibility of Certificate of Obligations as a driving factor.

Mayor stated that this year this Council will: immediately begin to study the options provided by Alec Luong and work with the finance department to better understand the financing details and name a Public Safety Building Committee. All of the aforementioned things will be achieved before the May 7, 2022, election date.

\*\* No action was taken.

- b. Discussion relating to Managerial Audit - Legal G. Knebel  
Consulting City Attorney Gus Knebel gave a brief summary of his findings after conducting a Managerial Audit as directed by former Interim City Manager Chaise Cary. There were (5) primary issues to be reviewed: succession planning, records management, City issued vehicles for elected officials, the 2021-2022 budget and staffing within the City Manager's office. City Attorney Knebel recalled that the top (6) employees all left within a two-week period on or shortly after July 1, 2021, those employees being Charles "Tink" Jackson (City Manager), Charlene Warren (Assistant City Manager), David Jordan (Assistant City Manager), Derra Purnell (City Attorney), Todd Weidman (Fire Chief), and Charles "Kirk" Jackson (Police Chief). The latter who had already announced his retirement but rescheduled his departure date to coincide with the exodus. The report stated that no evidence of criminal actions was discovered, but a culture of distrust between upper-level staff and City Council. City attorney went on to speak on the topics of communication channels, Police Association negotiations, the use of City vehicles by former elected officials, and staffing in the City Manager's Office.

After a lengthy discussion with City Council no action was taken.

## **(7) NEW BUSINESS**

- a. Discussion/possible action regarding the City Manager position for the City of La Marque - Mayor K. Bell

Mayor Bell asked for representatives from both the Community panel which consisted of (4) chairpersons of City Boards and Commissions and also the panel of director level staff. They gave short reports of their observations during the process and thanked Council for the ability to participate in such an important process.

After some preliminary discussions and taking Staff and the Community leaders input into consideration it was determined that Cesar Garcia, Lionel Lyons, and Cynthia Northrop were top contenders.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian gave a compelling argument for Mr. Garcia, noting his ability to innovate, and comparing him to a former employee of a Greater Houston city that showed similar promise and went on to do amazing things.

Council member McAuliffe and Council member Yancy expressed discomfort with having this full discussion in public due to the nature of some of the discussions that needed to be had, both agreeing that personnel discussions are very sensitive, and a public meeting was not the forum to discuss some of the details.

\*\* Mayor Bell closed the Special meeting and moved into Executive Session under Section 551.074 (Personnel Matters) 7:49 p.m.

\*\* Mayor Bell closed the Executive Session and reconvened the Special meeting at 8:14 p.m.

Council member Yancy announced her top two candidates as Cesar Garcia and Lionel Lyons speaking to the fact that Mr. Garcia has management experience, professionalism, bilingual, is local and can begin quickly, and also received buy in from our community panel.

\*\* Mayor Pro Tem Compian made a motion to extend an offer to Cesar Garcia for the City Manager position. Council member Yancy seconded the motion.

Mayor spoke to some heartburn over the nomination, not because he is a bad candidate, he sees a lot of potential but identifies that Ms. Northrop has a wealth of experience. He is not declining to work with Mr. Garcia in the event that he is chosen but he is unsettled at this time.

Council member McAuliffe also expressed the remarkable potential of Mr. Garcia; however, she too is unsettled.

After Mayor Bell asked the City Attorney Council member McAuliffe asked the Council to also consider Lionel Lyons.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian and Council member Yancy spoke to why Mr. Garcia is their top choice. Councilwoman McAuliffe acknowledged that her fellow councilmembers made good points.

Mayor asked the community leaders and city staff if they would be comfortable working with Mr. Garcia, the overwhelming majority said yes. Development Services Director reassured Council that staff will work with whomever Council chooses, it would not be fair to ask staff who they like personally, staff is in full support of Council's decision. Mayor acknowledged that he nor Council is asking for staff to make a decision but is showing compassion and making sure that staff would be ok with the choice.

Executive to the City Manager Jennifer Earl spoke also identifying that in her opinion the City needs someone with experience and a sense of stability. She expressed the need for someone who is in it for the long haul and does not want someone to treat the City as a training ground.

Mr. Loftis spoke to the need for someone who is strong-willed with experience, he speaks to hiring Mr. Garcia simply because he is the best candidate, not on the strength of the fact that he lives here. Sometimes people from the outside can be a better option, other times not so much so. The community is asking that the Council makes the right choice, based on the qualifications that they have.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian made a point of clarification that all of the candidates are highly qualified and were vetted by one of the highest-ranking search firms in the nation.

Council member McAuliffe reminded Council that one of the initial criteria, for all of Council, was for candidates to have City Manager experience and

identified that as the reason that Mr. Lyons and Ms. Northrop were “edging out” Mr. Garcia.

\*\* After much deliberation the MOTION PASSED WITH 4 VOTES AND ONE ABSTENTION.

Council spoke to the need to revisit the standard contract that the City has provided to the former city managers. Mayor Bell requested that the 11-month severance not be offered as it has been traditionally simply due to the burden it places on the city’s reserve fund. Council member McAuliffe spoke to wanting to review best practices and also be cautious about this issue taking into consideration the events of last fiscal year.

Mayor asked that a contract be brought to Council at the next meeting before negotiations begin.

\*\* Mayor Bell closed the Special Meeting and retreated into Executive Session at 8:55 p.m.

**(8) EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The City Council for the City of La Marque, Texas reserves the right to adjourn into executive session at any time during the course of this meeting to discuss any of the matters listed above, as authorized the Texas Government Code Section 551.071 (Consultation with Attorney), 551.072 (Deliberations about Real Property), 551.073 (Deliberations about Gifts and Donations), 551.074 (Personnel Matters), 551.076 (Deliberations about Security Devices) and 551.086 (Economic Development)

- a. Consultation with attorney (section 551.071)- Discussion relating to Bond Election

\*\* Mayor closed the Executive Session and returned to the Special Meeting at 10:46 p.m.

**(9) REQUESTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Council member Yancy announced the Stop the Violence events that begin Saturday, February 19, 2022.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian announced the Garden Club’s Cleanup event that is also being held Saturday, February 19, 2022, beginning at the Central Fire Station at 9:30 a.m. as apart of the Keep Texas Beautiful Adopt a Road program. He also asked that soon we have a “good spirited” discussion about water bills in the near future.

Mayor announced the Texas Independent Trail Ride at Highland Bayou Park, also taking place on Saturday, February 19, 2022, and the first annual State of the Cities address at La Marque High School. This event will take place at 6:00 pm on February 24, 2022.

Council member Carlson notified the community of a new business called “Sweet Treats” near Barcnas owned by a La Marque High School graduate. He apologized to the Council for not participating in the City Manager decision.

**(10) ADJOURNMENT**

\*\* Meeting was adjourned at 11:03 p.m.

---

*This unofficial copy of the minutes from the above meeting are posted for convenience only. Executed or certified copies of the minutes can be requested by contacting the City Clerk.*

---