

MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
CITY OF COLLEGE STATION
DECEMBER 9, 2013

STATE OF TEXAS §
 §
COUNTY OF BRAZOS §

Present:

Nancy Berry, Mayor

Council:

Blanche Brick
Jess Fields
Karl Mooney
John Nichols
Julie Schultz
James Benham, absent

City Staff:

Kathy Merrill, Interim City Manager
Carla Robinson, City Attorney
Sherry Mashburn, City Secretary

1. Call to Order and Announce a Quorum is Present

With a quorum present, the Special Meeting of the College Station City Council was called to order by Mayor Berry at 4:28 p.m. on Monday, December 9, 2013 in the Council Chambers of the City of College Station City Hall, 1101 Texas Avenue, College Station, Texas 77842.

2. Presentation and discussion on the relationship between the Council, City Manager and staff; and a review of procedures for requesting information by City Manager, Kelly Templin.

City Manager Kelly Templin reiterated the relationship between the Council and the City Manager; Council sets policy, and he implements the policy. He sees no problem with Councilmembers contacting department heads, but he asked them to please copy him of any issues that affect policy. He noted that citizen complaints do need to be relayed to the City Manager in order to be investigated, and he stressed that he doesn't want to become a bottle neck. He encouraged Council to have a relationship with staff, but stated that employee morale can be affected, especially when it relates to employee performance complaints by citizens. It is important in how they hear it and in what context.

3. Presentation and discussion on Communications and Handling Media Inquiries by Public Communications Director, Jay Socol.

Jay Socol, Director of Public Communications, reminded Council that as an organization we are trying to be truthful, transparent, and instill trust with the public. We care, we listen, and we respond; City staff and Council both embrace that concept. His goal is to make information useful to people. There are three primary audiences: internal customers, external (citizens/students/businesses/organizations), and the media. The College Station brand that most people identify with is "Home of Texas A&M", but the actual brand is what people expect of us (think of us); and he emphasized that the Council is the brand. He noted that it is nice to work in an organization that is so customer friendly focused. His office is available to help with talking points, drafting speeches, preparing presentations, or facilitating interviews. Embedded within the department's strategic goals, they strive to be proactive, honest, to utilize subject matter experts, and to be innovative and leaders in our fields. The department works hard to set the narrative before someone does it for us. They generate a lot of content . . . they tell stories. Currently, they are in the middle of the annual media survey to see how they are doing. He referenced Section 3 of the Council Relations Policy, which addresses media relations and noted that the Mayor is the primary spokesperson. He recommended that Councilmembers check with the City Manager before an interview as a heads up. He is working closely with the CVB regarding marketing, and there is still have a lot of work to do. The CVB is not always presenting the City's marketing message.

4. Presentation and discussion on Conflict of Interest by City Attorney, Carla Robinson.

City Attorney Carla Robinson stated that, upon their election to public office, they were no longer an individual citizen, and as elected official, they are subject to laws that concern conflict of interest. Up until 2012, the City Charter had more restrictive language than state law. However, the charter was amended in November 2012 and now reflects state law. There is a simple test to determine if there is a conflict of interest: 1) if you have substantial interest in a business that does business with the City or 2) if you have ownership interest in real property that will potentially be affected by Council action, if the action that Council takes will have a special economic effect that others in the public will not realize. She recommended they contact the legal department if any questions pertaining to conflict of interest arise. She noted that if there is possibility of a conflict, but not quite sure, then to err on the side of caution. She reported that an Affidavit must be filed with the City Secretary before the discussion, and they cannot participate in the discussion or vote.

5. Presentation and discussion on Open Records and Public Information; Council Agenda Process; Parliamentary Procedure; and the Council Relations Policy and Code of Ethics by City Secretary, Sherry Mashburn.

City Secretary Sherry Mashburn provided information on a couple of legislative changes that will affect the City; specifically HB 259 Electioneering and SB 1368 Public Information Act. Video conferencing was also briefly discussed. She explained the process for Open Records Requests and the importance of referring those requests to the City Secretary's Office. Related

to the Agenda Process, she updated the Council on the new agenda software and its anticipated implementation by late February or early March. Council relations were also discussed.

6. Adjournment

MOTION: There being no further business, Mayor Berry adjourned the special meeting of the College Station City Council at 5:20 p.m. on Monday, August 9, 2013.


Nancy Berry, Mayor

ATTEST:


Sherry Mashburn, City Secretary