

CITY OF NATALIA

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**PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED PROPERTY TAX RATE
PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED ANNUAL BUDGET
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
2078 STATE HWY 132 NORTH, NATALIA, TEXAS 78059
20 SEPTEMBER 2021 at 6:45 P.M.**

MINUTES

1. OPEN PUBLIC HEARING (6.45 pm)

a) Public hearing to receive citizens' comments on the proposed 2021-2022 Property Tax Rate
Natalia resident, Ruby Vera, addressed the council concerning the proposed 2021-2022 property tax rate to ask how much the average home owner would pay, to which City Administrator Hinojosa responded that the taxes on a \$100,000 home last year was \$736.20 and taxes on a \$100,000 home this year would be lowered by \$20.50 to \$716.20.

b) Public hearing to receive citizens' comments on the proposed 2021-2022 Annual Budget
Ms. Vera again addressed the council concerning the budget if we would be in the red or in the black, to which Hinojosa responded that it would not be legal to present a budget with a deficit. She noted this was the first time she was looking at the budget and indicated it was not publicly available to which Hinojosa replied that the budget is available online and at City Hall.

2. CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

With no further comments, Alderman Bluemel made a motion to close the public hearing at 7.01, with Alderwoman seconding the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

ROLL CALL: Mayor Tommy Ortiz – Present
Alderman Mike Fernandez – Present
Alderman Sam Bluemel – Present

Mayor Pro-Tem Sam Smith – Present
Alderman Darin Frazier - Present
Alderman Selica Vera – Present

3. CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Ortiz called the regular city council meeting to order at 7:01 pm; followed by the Pledge of Allegiance lead by Alderman Vera and Invocation by Alderman Bluemel.

4. CITIZENS TO BE HEARD:

Eric Smith addressed the council about recent crime, suspicious characters, police coverage, and dog problems. Marissa Salazar thanked police for their efforts, voiced concerns about recent fires and vandalism, suggesting the police patrol at night and indicating that the City needs more police presence.

5. CITY COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Alderwoman Vera had no comment. Alderman Fernandez spoke about a rumored "community party" at the Natalia Veterans Memorial Sportsplex to be held in place of National Night Out, which had been cancelled due to COVID-19 concerns. He was concerned about it being held on City property. He also expressed concerns about 18-wheeler parking in the City, reminded the council members that while we have a juvenile curfew, suggestions of stopping adults at night was out of the question as we do not

have a curfew for adults. He also said that the City is not broke, but we cannot afford to have coverage all night. Alderman Frazier said that new tractors had been purchased to clean up the city, suggested neighborhood watches and that residents take a more proactive attitude towards confronting unknown people walking at night, and requested discussion about a community center for next month's agenda. Alderman Smith had no comment. Alderman Bluemel commented that dogs are dropped off from around the county here in the city and that dogs are also allowed by residents out of their yards. He noted that Chief Naff is now picking up dogs. Mayor Ortiz noted big changes are coming, that the City was working within budgetary constraints, and that proper regulations are followed concerning dogs.

6. CONSENT AGENDA:

All of the following items are considered to be routine by the City Council, there will be no separate discussion on these items and will be enacted with one motion; unless removed by any Council Member to discuss and consider separately by making such request prior to a motion and vote.

- a) Approval of the Minutes: 16 August 2021 Regular Meeting
27 August 2021 Special Meeting
- b) Approval of the Financial Activity Report: August 2021
- c) Approval of the Utility Department Activity Report: August 2021
- d) Approval of the Municipal Court Activity Report: August 2021
- e) Approval of the Police Department Activity Report: August 2021
- f) Approval of the Police Code Enforcement Activity Report: August 2021

Action: Alderman Fernandez made the motion approving the consent agenda, and Alderwoman Vera seconded the motion. Vote: 5-0; Motion carried unanimously.

7. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

- a) City Administrator/Secretary
 - i. ePay and eBill are to be implemented imminently.
 - ii. HOME Program houses are under construction.
 - iii. Marshal Hoak, Congressional Staffer for Congressman Gonzales will be in Council Chambers 21 September 2021 from 1-3 pm.
 - iv. Stop signs posted at 7th St and Aubrey.
 - v. Hand sanitizers are available at City Hall, courtesy of Hillyard, for residents when paying bills.
- b) Utility Director
 - i. Drought Stage I effective 01 September 2021. It was clarified that no restrictions are in place, but residents are requested to reduce consumption.
- c) Chief of Police
 - i. \$6,000 received from Medina Electric for laptops and dash cameras.
 - ii. Police Clerk retirement/resignation effective 29 September 2021.

DISCUSSION/CONSIDERATION OF ACTION ITEMS:

8. Discussion/Consider a Resolution; Mental Health Leave Policy for Police Officers.

Discussion: City Administrator Hinojosa noted that Senate Bill (SB) 1359 requires each law enforcement agency in Texas to "develop and adopt a policy allowing the use of mental health leave by the peace officers employed by the agency who experience a traumatic event in the scope of that employment." SB 1359 was signed into law on June 7, 2021, and became effective on September 1, 2021. The intent of the proposed Mental Health Leave Policy is to comply with SB 1359.

Action: Alderman Bluemel made a motion to accept the resolution as presented; Alderwoman Vera seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

9. Discuss/Consider a Resolution; Paid Quarantine Leave Policy for municipal employees.

Discussion: City Administrator Hinojosa explained that the governing body of a political subdivision must develop and implement a paid quarantine leave policy for certain employees by the political

subdivision. The leave applies if a covered employee is ordered to isolate or quarantine because of a possible or known exposure to a communicable disease while on duty. This resolution complies with HB 2073.

Action: Alderman Bluemel made a motion to accept the resolution as presented; Alderman Smith seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

- 10.** Discuss/Consider a Resolution of the City Council of the City of Natalia, Texas joining with the State of Texas and political subdivisions of the state as a party in the Texas Opioid Settlement agreements secured by the Office of the Attorney General; authorizing the City Administrator to execute settlement participation forms; and establishing an effective date.

Discussion: Hinojosa stated the state has a settlement allocation plan they have agreed to that will involve individual cities receiving a portion of funds directly from the Opioid Settlement. Unlike payments from the trust account, the direct payments are not restricted in their use. Hinojosa explained the City of Natalia was entitled to receive \$625 from this settlement.

Action: Alderwoman Vera made a motion to accept the resolution as presented. Alderman Frazier seconded the motion. Vote: 5-0. Motion carried unanimously.

- 11.** Presentation of TDA Form A1024 CDBG Section 3 Goals and Concepts as related to the CDBG Program and Grant Contract Number 7219309. Presented by Javier Zambrano, Senior Consultant, Grantworks.

Mr. Zambrano explained that TDA issued a revised Section 3 Rule, Policy Issuance CDBG 20-01 on July 1, 2021 that now applies to all projects receiving CDBG funds. As part of this policy issuance, localities are required to present the Section 3 CDBG program goals in a City Council meeting. The intent of the Section 3 Program goals is to promote economic opportunities for low and very low-income persons in projects using CDBG funds.

Action: No action.

- 12.** Discuss/Consider a Resolution; designating an official newspaper for all city publications for fiscal year 2021-2022.

Discussion: As a representative from Devine News was in attendance, the Council agreed to re-designate The Devine News as the official newspaper.

Action: Alderman Fernandez made a motion to designate The Devine News as the official newspaper for all city publications for the fiscal year 2021-2022. Alderman Vera seconded the motion. Vote: 5-0; Motion carried unanimously.

- 13.** Discuss/Consider Action on Ordinance; Declaring Unopposed Candidates in the November 2, 2021 General City Election elected, and Cancelling said Election.

a. Certificates of Election shall be issued to the following three (3) Unopposed Candidates:

- i. "Chip" Samuel Bluemel, Jr., Mayor
- ii. Darin Frazier, Alderman
- iii. Tommy F. Ortiz, Alderman.

Discussion: None.

Action: Mayor Pro-Tem Smith made a motion to cancel the election by ordinance and declared unopposed candidates in the upcoming election. Ald. Fernandez seconded the motion. Vote: 5-0. Motion carried unanimously.

- 14.** Discuss/Consider an Ordinance establishing a civil penalty for tampering with water meters; repealing conflicting ordinances; and providing for a severability clause.

Discussion: Hinojosa noted there have been several instances with meter tampering and/or theft of service. He explained that currently we report the violation to the police but that the Utility does not assess any charges on the bills. He proposed a \$250 civil penalty but noted that the Council is free to change that either up or down, or to not accept the proposed ordinance. Mayor

Pro-Tem Smith noted that the residents would be more likely to pay a \$250 penalty than a \$2,000 penalty. Frazier and Fernandez noted their support.

Action: Mayor Pro-Tem Smith made a motion approving the ordinance, and Alderman Bluemel seconded the motion. Vote: 5-0. Motion passed unanimously.

15. Discuss/Consider the need for a new vehicle for the Police Department. (Chief Naff)

Discussion: Chief Naff reported that the police department vehicles are old and in a state of disrepair and was of the opinion that the cost of maintaining the vehicles would justify the purchase of a new vehicle. She stated the department will qualify for a Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) that can be used for purchasing a vehicle, though the next round of funding doesn't open until March 2022. Assistant City Secretary Nikki Bermea said that the police department spent nearly \$10,000 on the repair and maintenance of vehicles during the current 2020-2021 fiscal year, which is almost \$5,000 over what was budgeted. However, the department as a whole has a budget surplus due to employee turnover.

Action: Alderwoman Vera moved to purchase a new vehicle for the police department. Alderman Fernandez seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

16. Discuss/Consider 2021-2022 Public Holidays for City of Natalia.

Discussion: Hinojosa explained that the City currently provides 13 paid holidays for full-time employees. The Council has repeatedly recognized that municipal employees are paid significantly less when compared to other municipal employees when compared to both surrounding communities and communities of similar size. Another city holiday could boost morale and cost the city nothing in terms of monetary value as it would simply require employees to be more efficient to complete work. He recommended either adding New Year's Eve (to allow for a longer holiday), Juneteenth (since June has no recognized holiday), or even a floating holiday to allow employees to utilize as they best see fit. Alderwoman Vera suggested a floating holiday as the office would not need to shut down for an extra holiday, which might inconvenience customers.

Action: Alderwoman Vera made a motion to add a floating holiday for eligible employees; Alderman Frazier seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

17. Discuss/Consider a Resolution; Adopting the Natalia Municipal Development District Proposed Budgets for Fiscal Year 2021-2022.

Action: Alderman Fernandez made a motion to adopt the NMDD budget for FY 2021-2022 as presented. Alderwoman Vera seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

18. Discussion/Consider Ordinance; Ratifying the Adoption of the City of Natalia's Municipal Fund Budgets for Fiscal Year 2021-2022.

Discussion: This budget will raise more revenue from property taxes than last year's budget by an amount of \$22,707 which is a 7.4% percent increase from last year's budget. The property tax revenue to be raised from new property added to the tax roll this year is \$12,117.

Action: Alderman Frazier moved to pass the ordinance adopting the Municipal Budgets for FY 2021-2022 as presented. Alderman Fernandez seconded the motion. Record vote as follows:

Vote:

Mayor Tommy Ortiz – Present; not voting	Mayor Pro-Tem Sam Smith – Yes
Alderman Mike Fernandez – Yes	Alderman Darin Frazier - Yes
Alderman Sam Bluemel – Yes	Alderman Selica Vera – Yes

19. Discussion/Consider Ordinance; Levying Ad Valorem Taxes for Tax Year 2021-2022 of a Tax Rate of \$0.7162 on each \$100 valuation of property; apportioning tax to the specific purpose; establishing due and delinquency dates; assessment of penalties and interest; and providing for a record vote.

Action: Mayor Pro-Tem Smith: moved that the property tax rate be increased by the adoption of a tax rate of 0.7162, which is effectively a 3.53 percent increase in the tax rate. Alderman Frazier seconded the motion.

Vote:

Mayor Tommy Ortiz – Present; not voting	Mayor Pro-Tem Sam Smith – Yes
Alderman Mike Fernandez – Yes	Alderman Darin Frazier - Yes
Alderman Sam Bluemel – Yes	Alderman Selica Vera – Yes

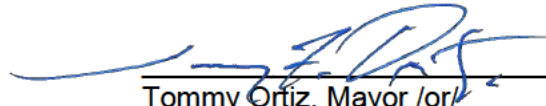
20. Discuss/Consider setting a date and time for a Special Meeting

Action: Special meeting set for Tuesday, 28 Sept 2021 at 5.30 pm.

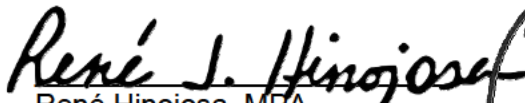
21. Adjournment. Alderwoman Vera motioned to adjourn at 7.51 pm, and Alderman Fernandez seconded the motion. Vote: Motion passed unanimously by a 5-0 vote.

Passed and Approved this 18th day of October, 2021.

Approval:


Tommy Ortiz, Mayor /or/
Sam Smith, Mayor Pro-Tem

Attest:


René Hinojosa, MPA
City Administrator/Secretary

