

CITY OF NATALIA

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REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS 2078 STATE HWY 132 NORTH, NATALIA, TEXAS 21 SEPTEMBER 2020 at 7:00 P.M.

MINUTES

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

CALL TO ORDER:

1. Mayor Ortiz called the regular city council meeting to order at 7:00 pm; followed by the Pledge of Allegiance by Alderman Vera and Invocation by Alderman Bluemel.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD:

2. None.

PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS:

3. Mayor Ortiz opened the public hearing for citizen comments at 7.01 pm for the following:
 - a. Tax Year 2020 Proposed Tax Rate.
Public Comments: City Administrator René Hinojosa informed the City Council that although the proposed Tax Rate for Tax Year 2020 was published in the paper as \$0.8255, the expected rate to be adopted would be \$0.7367, which is the voter approval rate, formerly known as the rollback rate.
Mayor Ortiz announced that City Council will vote the proposed tax rate later in this Regular City Council Meeting. Mayor Ortiz closed the public hearing at 7.02 pm.

CITY COUNCIL COMMENTS:

4. The mayor thanked those present. He stated the City Council wants to have the Fire/Police/City staff work together and stressed the need to know each other and work together. He mentioned that has not been done in an exceptionally long time. He was happy/glad that all are here.
 - a) Presentation of Honoree Citizen of the Year award to Cory Bradley
Police Chief Fleming recognized Cory Bradley and presented him with an Honoree Citizen of the Year award in recognition of his efforts to always assist the Police and Fire Departments in any way necessary.
 - b) Recognition of the Volunteer Fire Department for achieving ISO Class 2 Rating
Police Chief Fleming recognized the Natalia Volunteer Fire Department for achieving an ISO Class 2 Rating. An improved PCC rating can effectively lower the cost of property insurance rates for residential and commercial properties within the community. This award was presented in recognition of outstanding dedication in providing exemplary fire protection services to the community.
 - c) ~~Introduction of the newly hired Police Officer, Mario Trujillo (absent)~~
 - d) Introduction of the newly hired Police Officer, Alexis Spengler

- e) Introduction of the newly hired Reserve Police Officer, Ivan Diaz
- f) Introduction of the newly hired Reserve Officer, Carlos de la Rosa
Spengler, Diaz, and de la Rosa were all presented to the City Council.
- g) Alderman Fernandez informed the City Council that National Night Out has been cancelled due to COVID-19. Alderman Frazier recognized that it is an important tradition and was sad to see it cancelled this year. Alderman Vera suggested all residents turn on their front porch lights at 7 pm on October 6, the day it would have been held. Alderman Fernandez suggested putting Alderman Vera's suggestion in the newspaper and said that Brenda Fernandez would do that.

5. **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: 17 August 2020 Regular Meeting
- b) Approval of the Financial Activity Report: August 2020
- c) Approval of the Utility Department Activity Report: August 2020
- d) Approval of the Municipal Court Activity Report: August 2020
- e) Approval of the Police Department Activity Report: August 2020

Action: Alderman Fernandez made a motion approving all; Alderman Bluemel seconded the motion.
Vote: Motion passed unanimously with a 5-0 vote.

DISCUSSION/CONSIDERATION OF ACTION ITEMS:

- 6. Discuss/Consider street paving project with Jerry Beck, County Commissioner for Precinct #4.
Jerry Beck, County Commissioner for Precinct #4 was not present at the meeting. The City Council recognized the need to repave certain streets. Alderman Smith said that he had been quoted by Jerry Beck a cost for materials of about \$38,000 to 40,000 per mile of roads. Assistant City Secretary Nichole Bermea noted we have about \$58,000 in funds set aside for street repairs. Alderman Vera noted approximately 16 blocks equal a mile. Utility Director Art Smith said that Bartlett is the worst street.
Action: Alderman Frazier made a motion to approve repaving a minimum of one mile of city roads at a date to be decided later; Alderman Bluemel seconded the motion. Vote: Motion passed unanimously with a 5-0 vote.
- 7. Discuss/Consider utility truck bed installation.
City Administrator René Hinojosa explained that the truck scheduled to be transferred from the Police Department to the Utility Department at the end of this fiscal year needs to be retrofitted in order to be suitable for Utility. Since the cost exceeds a set amount, this item is put before the council for a vote.
Action: Alderman Frazier made a motion to accept the \$6,500 estimate from Alamo Truck Accessories as presented; Alderman Smith seconded the motion. Vote: Motion passed unanimously with a 5-0 vote.
- 8. Discuss/Consider adoption of Ordinance; Amending the City's Adopted Municipal Budgets for Fiscal Year beginning October 1, 2019 and ending September 30, 2020, and setting an effective date.
Discussion: City Administrator Hinojosa explained that various unforeseen expenses cause for this year's budget to be amendment, to cover several costs. Hinojosa explained that several line items were revised to balance the fiscal year budget.
Action: By super-majority record vote, the FY 2019-2020 Budget amendments passed unanimously.
FOR: Sam Bluemel, Selica Vera, Sam Smith, Darin Frazier, Mike Fernandez
AGAINST: None. **ABSENT:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None.
PRESENT, NOT VOTING: Mayor Tommy Ortiz
- 9. Discuss/Consider amendments, postponement, or adoption of Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Final Budgets.

Discussion: City Administrator Hinojosa explained that several minor adjustments and revisions to the proposed budgets have been made in order to balance the budget.

Action: By super-majority record vote, the FY 2020-2021 Budget passed unanimously.

Record vote to adopt the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Budget is as follows:

FOR: Sam Bluemel, Selica Vera, Sam Smith, Darin Frazier, Mike Fernandez

AGAINST: None. **ABSENT:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None.

PRESENT, NOT VOTING: Mayor Tommy Ortiz

10. Discussion/Consider Ordinance; Levying Ad Valorem Taxes for Tax Year 2020 of a Tax Rate of \$0.8255 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.

Discussion: City Administrator Hinojosa stated that previous miscommunication in June caused the Tax Assessor to calculate the tax rate incorrectly and that the rates were recalculated after the tax notice in the paper had been published. However, he did not foresee any residents complaining about a lower tax rate. Alderman Smith asked if this tax rate is enough for our needs and expressed concerns about the budget for next year. Hinojosa explained that the lower tax rate is due to the elimination of the Debt Service Rate. No portion of the 2020 property taxes for the City of Natalia is assigned for repayment by debt service. This year's proposed Fiscal Year Budget allocates a total municipal debt of \$117,318.07 secured by Utility Fund Reserves. Hinojosa also explained that the governor has urged local governments against increasing property taxes for Texas due to COVID-19. Hinojosa explained that he does not want to see the taxpayers burdened more than they need to be this year because of this.

Action: Alderman Bluemel made the motion approving the property tax rate be decreased by the adoption of Tax Rate \$0.7367, which is effectively a 9.27% decrease from this year's effective tax rate; and Alderman Frazier seconded the motion.

Record vote is as follows:

FOR: Sam Bluemel, Selica Vera, Sam Smith, Darin Frazier, Mike Fernandez

AGAINST: None. **ABSENT:** None. **ABSTAIN:** None.

PRESENT, NOT VOTING: Mayor Tommy Ortiz

11. Discuss/Consider a Resolution of the City Council of the City of Natalia, Texas, authorizing the submission of the CARES Act Coronavirus relief fund Grant to the Texas Department of Emergency Management for the CARES Act Coronavirus relief Fund; and authorizing the City Administrator and/or the Mayor to act as the City's Executive Officer and authorized representative in all matters pertaining to the City's participation in the CARES Act Coronavirus relief Fund Grant.

Discussion: City Administrator Hinojosa explained this was a first and necessary part of the process to receive CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund Grant monies.

Action: Alderman Smith made the motion to approve the resolution as presented and Alderman Bluemel seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously by a 5-0 vote.

12. Discuss/Consider a Resolution to designate an Official Newspaper for Natalia.

Action: Alderman Frazier made a motion designating the Devine Newspaper as the city's official newspaper for FY2020/21; Alderman Vera seconded the motion. Vote: Motion passed unanimously by a 5-0 vote.

13. Discuss/Consider engaging into a service agreement with Beyer & Co. for auditing the city's financial statements for fiscal year ending September 30, 2020.

Hinojosa explained that Beyer & Co.'s gross fee will not exceed \$23,500, which includes \$14,000 for the regular audit, \$7,000 for the single audit, and \$2,500 for the municipal development district.

Action: Alderman Smith made a motion accepting the agreement, and Alderman Fernandez seconded the motion. Vote: Motion passed unanimously by a 5-0 vote.

14. Discuss/Consider Ordinance; Amending the Garbage Rates, and providing for an effective date.

Discussion: Discussion: City Administrator Hinojosa explained that Republic Services will be increasing the city's garbage rates for residential and commercial by 2.94% effective October 1st, which ultimately will decrease the city's generated income by \$4,216, and proposes the city recover those costs through a customer rate increase.

Action: Alderman Bluemel made the motion approving the garbage rate amendments; and Alderman Vera seconded the motion. Vote: Motion passed unanimously by a 5-0 vote

15. Discuss/Consider Action on Ordinance; Declaring Unopposed Candidates in the November 3, 2020 General City Election elected, and Canceling said Election.

Discussion: City Administrator Hinojosa mentioned that a prospective applicant was not an eligible voter and therefore the application was rejected, in which Certificates of Election are to be issued to the three unopposed candidates: Alderman – Sam Smith, Alderman – Mike Fernandez, and Alderman – Selica Vera.

Action: Alderman Bluemel made a motion to approve the ordinance; and Alderman Frazier seconded the motion. Vote: Motion passed unanimously by 5-0 vote.

16. **STAFF REPORTS:**

- a) City Administrator: 1.) The Downtown Revitalization Project is complete and the variance application has been approved. We are in the final close out stages and expect this project to be completed. 2.) COVID-19 Testing in the Natalia City Council Chambers on 22 August 2020 was a success. A total of 64 individuals were tested, of which 14 tested positive in the serological test (meaning they have antibodies and have been exposed to the virus in the past), and only one tested positive in the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) nasal swab test (meaning they currently have COVID-19). In accordance with HIPAA regulations, the City does not have any identifiable information on anyone who was tested. Hinojosa noted that all staff from the Center for Advanced Wellness were using proper precautions including face masks and gloves, that proper social distancing was maintained throughout, and that the staff thoroughly sanitized the room and all objects and surfaces prior to leaving. 3.) Staff Health Insurance for 2020-21 FY has been approved. The City will stay with Humana this year. The premiums for the Renewal Replacement Plan have gone down significantly, but Hinojosa noted that co-pays, deductibles, and cost for medications have changed as well. Dental, Vision, and AD&D rates and coverages have not changed. Since the medical health insurance went down significantly, we were able to include Short Term Disability with Sun Life and still save over \$4,000 per year. Hinojosa noted that an employee is eligible for STD after only 8 days from the date the employee is unable to work due to an injury or illness and that employees are eligible for a weekly benefit that replaces 60% of the Total Weekly Earnings. Assistant City Secretary Nichole Bermea noted that the benefits may be paid for up to 12 weeks. 4.) Hinojosa noted that the Water/Sewer Rates were set to increase by 1.2% as per the 5-year rate plan and that no action was necessary since this rate plan had already been approved and was in effect.
- b) Public Works Director delivered the Utility Activity Report for August 2020 and noted that the numbers were much the same and that there was lots of water left to pump. He also noted that Edwards Aquifer were under restrictions. He also mentioned that we could possibly make some money from the school construction project by selling bulk water to them.
- c) Police Chief noted that two full time positions and two reserve positions have been filled. A part-time code compliance officer position was still open. Fleming noted that one officer will take a code enforcement class, possibly William McKay. He noted that there were still four positions open and he had ten applicants. Alderman Frazier reminded the Police Chief to watch the budget and to vary the unmanned coverage hours in order to deter criminals.

17. **ADJOURNMENT**

Alderman Fernandez motioned to adjourn at 8.15 pm. Alderman Vera seconded the motion.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously with a 5-0 vote.

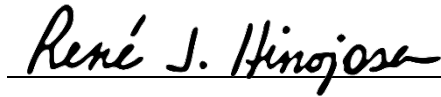
Passed and Approved this 19th day of October, 2020.

Approval:



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

Attested by:



René Hinojosa, MPA

City Administrator/Secretary

