

**City of Natalia, Texas**  
**Regular City Council Meeting**  
**September 16, 2019 at 7:00 pm**  
**Minutes**

Roll Call: Mayor Tommy Ortiz ó Present Mayor Pro-Tem Sam Smith - Absent  
Alderman Mike Fernandez ó Present Alderman Darin Frazier - Present  
Alderman Sam Bluemel ó 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 led by Alderman Fernandez and Invocation by Alderman Bluemel.

Citizens to be Heard:

- 2) 1-Emilio Flores spoke against the reason for a tax rate increase of 5.28%, while still affording 100% benefit employer coverage, providing a 3% COLA for employees and a \$0.75 cent to administrative staff. Stating coverage of 100% payroll benefits are a luxury in the past, and is not an investment of taxpayers for the tax rate increase; city administrator is doing nothing to make improvements to deteriorating water or sewer system, no new streets ó existing streets are littered in potholes, police patrol isn't 24/7 coverage and are substandard, drug and crime issues continue to increase, noting population has decreased from 2000-2010, and no new businesses in over a decade. 2-Emmanuel Padilla spoke against the tax rate increase, appalled that Natalia has the highest tax rate in the County; does not see any new benefits to the community to support this increase, and if the city cannot stay within budgetary means, to cut back in staff, services or purchases.

City Council Comments:

- 3) Mayor Ortiz read proclamation, proclaiming Tuesday, October 1, 2019 as National Night Out in the City of Natalia, Texas; calling upon all citizens to help make the community a safer and more enjoyable place to live, work and play.

Consent Agenda:

- 4) a. Approval of Minutes: August 19, September 4 and September 8, 2019 meeting minutes  
b. Approval of Financial Activity Report: August 2019  
c. Approval of Utility Department Activity Report: August 2019  
d. Approval of Municipal Court Activity Report: August 2019  
e. Approval of Police Department Activity Report: August 2019  
Action: Alderman Bluemel made the motion approving the consent agenda, and Alderwoman Vera seconded the motion. Vote: 4-0; Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Consideration of Action Items:

- 5) **Discussion/Consider waiving city's building permit fee for Natalia ISD Series 2019 facility construction (requested by Paul Michels, NISD; speaking – Dr. Cone).**  
Discussion: Submission of NISD Facility Plans were sent to the city for planning review, when calculating permit, inspection and plan review costs the total for the Bureau Veritas services was \$30,201.84, and the city permit cost was \$6,409.60. Dr. Cone request City Council to waive city's permit cost. Alderman Frazier reminded Dr. Cone of prior meetings mentioning that permit costs would be associated, and does not feel the city should waive all the permit fee of \$6,409.60 as issues seem to always arise during any time of construction that ends up costing the city money out of their budget.  
Action: Alderman Frazier made a motion reducing the city's permit fee to one-half (1/2) the actual cost, being \$3,204.80; and Alderman Fernandez seconded the motion. Vote: Motion passed unanimously by a 4-0 vote.
- 6) **Discuss/Consider alternative measures to the temporary street direction and designations created under Natalia ISDA facility construction (requested by Alderman Darin Frazier).**  
Discussion: Alderman Frazier expressed several safety concerns regarding the schools temporary street direction of school traffic that occurs before and after school; concerned that having two-lines of same-way traffic is causing a big safety and emergency hazard, in case of such emergencies needing police or EMS response, and not being able to pass-thru; also concerned about the length of time it takes to get children

in/off vehicles; and lastly about residents who currently reside on those streets being blocked from the school congestion. Dr. Cone, NISD Superintendent, is working with the construction contractors to better adjust the times and direction of traffic. Chief Rodriguez mentioned that a few emergency situations have occurred and people worked with police and emergency vehicles in maneuvering through traffic; however, police and school will continue to work through parking and signage issues for the next two years during construction.  
Action: None.

7) **Discuss/Consider First Amendment to Republic Service Solid Waste Contract. (requested by Blake Caesar, Republic Service Municipal Manager)**

Discussion: Blake addressed two issues for amendments, 1) A new method for which Republic Services will be calculating rate increases for services; percentage increases will remain between 2% - 4% but will be based on consumer price index for all urban consumers specific to water, sewer or trash services, rather than that posted collectively for all service items. Service rates were recently modified with a 3% increase to be applied effective October 1, 2019. The rate method amendments will have no effect on rates currently adopted for fiscal year. 2) Current contract services brush pickup monthly, this amendment will reduce the brush collection from monthly to four (4x) times per year, on a quarterly basis. A schedule will be discussed with City Administrator to determine the best months/day to provide services; this amendment will reduce the unsightly nuisance appearing on properties each month and will enhance the city's curbside appearance. The size permitted for brush collection will increase from 4-cubic yards (monthly) to no larger than 8-cubic yards (quarterly). The amendments have no effect on biannual bulk-item pickup, which is scheduled for the last week in October.

Action: Alderman Bluemel made a motion approving Republic Service contract amendments; and Alderman Fernandez seconded the motion. Vote: Motion passed unanimously by a 4-0 vote.

8) **Introduction/Consideration of commissioning James Vincent Fleming for the position of Reserve Police Officer for the Natalia Police Department (Mayor Ortiz to administer oath of office).**

Discussion: Chief Rodriguez mentioned that due to Fleming's work schedule that he could not be present; but is being recommended by Chief Rodriguez, and if approved, Linda Rodriguez, Police Secretary, being a Notary Public can administer the Oath of Office to officer.

Action: Alderwoman Vera made a motion accepting the reservation of James Vincent Fleming; and Alderman Frazier seconded the motion. Vote: Motion passed unanimously by a 4-0 vote.

9) **Discuss/Consider terms of the 2019/20 Lease Agreement made by and between the City of Natalia, and Natalia Little League for property located between State Hwy 132 & East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street off FM-471, and determine renewal.**

Discussion: Jaime Gomez, NLL President, requests for an extension until after October 1<sup>st</sup>, being that elections are soon to be held, and will appreciate the new officers input in regards to the lease terms. Gomez noted that the league doubled their profits from previous years by lowering the registration fees to \$29, which essentially increases the number of players, attendees, concession sales rose, and number of volunteers to assist in activities. Gomez reported a \$21,000 estimated fund balance for the end of this season. Alderman Frazier suggested the NLL establish a reserve fund to transfer excess profits in/out of for emergencies.

Action: Alderman Bluemel made a motion extending contract until the next regular meeting (October 21, 2019) for future consideration; and Alderman Frazier seconded the motion. Vote: Motion passed unanimously by a 4-0 vote.

10) **Discuss/Consider Resolution, designating an official newspaper for all city publications for fiscal year 2019-2020.**

Action: Alderman Fernandez made a motion designating the Devine Newspaper as the city's official newspaper for FY2019/20; Alderwoman Vera seconded the motion. Vote: Motion passed unanimously by a 4-0 vote.

11) **Discuss/Consider engaging into a service agreement with Beyer & CO. for auditing the city's financial statements for fiscal year ending September 30, 2019.**

Discussion: Alderman Frazier asked if the cost for services have increased? City Administrator Hernandez confirmed that costs increased by \$1,000 overall for auditing both the city's and districts financials, for a total amount of \$16,500.

Action: Alderman Fernandez made a motion accepting the agreement, and Alderman Frazier seconded the motion. Vote: Motion passed unanimously by a 4-0 vote.

12) **Discuss/Consider Ordinance; Levying ad valorem taxes for tax year 2019 of a Tax Rate of \$0.8980 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: Alderman Frazier addressed the citizens' concerns of the matter of tax rate increase; confirming that rate is increasing but slightly from current year's rate. The City has to increase rates to cover its overhead costs for all other services that increased, such as the auditors; and the rate of wages and benefits are increasing to attract and keep employees, to be better aligned with what other cities are paying employees; in addition to all the projects the city is currently under for grant matches and engineering fees. Alderman Fernandez reiterated the rate increase on a \$100,000 home will increase by \$26.50 from last year, noting that very few homes in Natalia are valued near \$100,000; the average home value is \$37,251. The tax rate is comprised of \$0.7850 for M&O and \$0.1130 for Debt. Alderman Bluemel explains the city property values are a lot less compared to other cities, and having low appraisal values means that tax rates must increase in order to maintain and afford current city services and operations.

Action: Alderman Frazier made the motion approving the property tax rate be increased by the adoption of Tax Rate \$0.8980, which is effectively a 5.28% increase from which the proposed tax rate exceeds this year's effective tax rate; and Alderman Fernandez seconded the motion.

Record Vote: FOR: Sam Bluemel, Selica Vera, Darin Frazier, Mike Fernandez

AGAINST: None. ABSENT: Sam Smith ABSTAIN: Mayor Tommy Ortiz

**13) Discuss/Consider approving capital repairs to an 8" Water Main at Fort Ewell Creek; and appropriating \$23,800 from unassigned Utility Capital Reserves.**

Discussion: PW Director Art Smith advised Council the water main repair made at Fort Ewell Creek was a quick-fix method to repair a water main under the creek's surface. Engineers advise we cause for a more permanent fix, to consider stabilizing the 8" main by boring under Fort Ewell Creek. Cost estimates were compared as to what was quoted by QRO Mex Construction; quoting a 20" pipe at \$120 per unit, a 14" pipe between \$150-\$260 per unit, and the quote received from QRO Mex for an 8" pipe is at \$119 per unit. Administrator Hernandez explained that the cost of labor, equipment and mobilization was not factored into QRO Mex Construction quote as the contractor will already be at the location making improvements to the sewer main located a few feet above the water main at Fort Ewell Creek under the USDA wastewater collection system project.

Action: Alderman Fernandez made a motion approving the allocation of \$23,800 from utility reserves; and Alderwoman Vera seconded the motion. Vote: Motion passed unanimously by a 4-0 vote.

Staff Reports:

- 14) **City Administrator:** 1) Republic Service Curbside Bulk Pickup begins October 28, 2019; flyers will be updated and distributed out by Republic Services onto customers trash cans. 2) Open nominations for the City of Natalia to serve on the Medina County Appraisal District Board of Directors. Nomination of candidates must be submitted by October 15, 2019. 3) Texas Municipal League Annual Conference registration is open for members to attend, cost per day is \$185 or \$470 for three-day seminar per attendee; members interested are to submit their interest no later than September 20<sup>th</sup> to administrators office.
- 15) **Chief of Police:** 1) Insurance Service Office (ISO) Public Protection Classification rating has increased for the City of Natalia from a 5 to a 2; 10 being the lowest (poor) and 1 being the highest (best); the city's improved rating is due to many fire hydrants being repaired or replaced, in addition to better equipment being used. Residents can provide the new rating to their home insurance provider to get better fire insurance rates.
- 16) **Adjournment.** Alderwoman Vera motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:25pm, and Alderman Frazier seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

**Passed and Approved this 21<sup>st</sup> day of October, 2019.**

Approval:

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

Attest:

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Lisa S. Hernandez, City Administrator/Secretary