

City of Natalia, Texas  
Special Meeting  
of the City Council  
held jointly with Natalia Municipal Development District  
June 29, 2015 at 6:30 pm  
Minutes

Roll Call:

|              |                                      |                                    |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| City Council | Mayor Ruby Vera - Present            | Alderman Sam Smith - Present       |
|              | Alderman Mike Fernandez - Present    | Alderman Tommy Ortiz - Present     |
|              | Alderman Sam Bluemel - Present       | Alderman Ruben Juarez - Present    |
| Natalia MDD  | Chair Doug Blevins - Absent          | Vice-Chair Gloria Vasquez - Absent |
|              | Secretary Brenda Fernandez - Present | Treasurer Nichole Bermea - Present |
|              | Director Maria Sanchez - Present     | Director Susanna Lara - Present    |
|              | Director Mark Marcum - Present       |                                    |

Call to Order:

- 1) Mayor Vera presided over the meeting, and called it to order at 6:30 pm followed by the pledge of allegiance, and the invocation led by Alderman Sam Bluemel.

Citizens to be Heard:

- 2) None.

Discussion/Consideration of Action Items:

- 3) **Discussion/Consider community interest and development projects for the City of Natalia.**
  - i. Community Park Plans
  - ii. Community Walk/Bike Trail Plans
  - iii. Other community interest and development projects to consider

Discussion: Mayor Vera presented the revised Haywood Park Plans, and mentioned the funding of \$40,000 being dedicated to this Park by the Natalia MDD. The funds will cover the costs of materials for the pavilions, restrooms, electrical and plumbing; subcommittees were divided to get bids/quotes for the electrical, plumbing and playground equipment.

Mayor Vera reiterated City Council action taken on July 21, 2014 *“Discussion/Consider Authorizing the Park Committee to proceed with planning for the development project of Haywood Park located at 704 Bennet Street. Mayor Vera explained that she has received negative comments in objection to the location of the park plans; and before she pursues this project she’s requesting a roll call vote from each member of their opinion and vote to proceed. Mayor Vera stated that this property was donated to the City for the use of a park, and if not this area then where? Alderman Smith shared that he believed the location of the property is not the ideal location for a park, and will not be monitored or used as much because of its location. Alderman Ortiz questioned if the Park Committee has plans or an idea available to present to Council of what they are seeking to do? Mayor Vera replied that plans are in place, and bankers are holding for a decision of how we’d like to pursue this, and how much is going to be needed. Roll Call Vote: Alderman Bluemel - approves and permits location. Alderman Ortiz - approves and permits location, and would like a presentation by the Park Committee to be presented at the next meeting. Alderman Fernandez - approves and permits location. Alderman Juarez - approves and permits location. Alderman Smith - abstains from vote. Vote: 4-0-1; Passed by a majority vote, with Alderman Smith abstaining.”*

Alderman Smith stated he wasn’t against the park, but not in favor of the location. Director Secretary Fernandez questioned where are our children to go for a playground, to Devine?; and

stated that the children need a place here. Director Treasurer Bermea stated the location is not a bad side of town, that it wouldn't matter where the park is located, vandalism happens on main streets including the baseball fields which is located off two main highways; also mentioning that not everything for the park has to be at this location, possibly just the basketball and volleyball courts, and playground equipment somewhere else; but the City needs to move forward. Director Sanchez believes that Natalia has community pride, and the community will become more involved and have respect for the park when they see something getting done, to "Think Positive" and not focus on the bad and the what-if's. Alderman Juarez also believes this community would take pride in the park. Alderman Ortiz commented that the undeveloped area would be good for soccer, football, and basketball, but as a park it would be hard for police to monitor. The City Administrator and NMDD Treasurer did a walk-thru on the property also known as First Street, behind Darin Frazier property of Palm Courts, mentioned that Mr. Frazier has cleaned it out a lot, and being in its location, it would be an ideal location for walking/biking trails; additionally, Mr. Frazier mentioned donating parts of his property for locating a community center if he sees the City actually doing something such as parks, bike/walk trails, etc. Many discussions between the entities, including citizens, regarding the park's location, facility equipment, and other location options were made; but to move forward Mayor Vera asked City Council and the Natalia MDD for a vote to move forward with the Haywood Park.

- a) Board of Director's Action – Director Treasurer Nichole Bermea made the motion to approve moving forward with Haywood Park, and Director Maria Sanchez seconds the motion. The motion passed by a 5-0 vote.
  - b) City Council Action – Alderman Fernandez made the motion to approve moving forward with Haywood Park, and Alderman Juarez seconds the motion. The motion passed by a 4-1 vote with Alderman Smith voting against.
- 4) **Discussion/Consider applying for Texas Department of Agriculture Downtown Revitalization Program Grant of up to \$150,000, and designating matching funds.**

Discussion: Betty Collier, GrantWorks Inc., introduced the requirements for applying for the grant and the scoring criteria, which funds are to make public improvements within a historic downtown commercial district which the City simply designates an area as such by showing the boundaries on the map to also depict the names of business within that district, additionally, City can obtain additional points for letters of support by businesses within the historic district. The maximum grant is \$150,000 at which the city must match either 10%, 20% or 30%, the more match the more points are awarded towards the application; the match can consist of cash, in-kind labor, or materials used for the project; however, at least \$25,000 must be in cash to cover engineering and administrative fees that are not supported by the grant. The matching funds can also be spread between two budget years. Mrs. Collier also explained that more points are awarded if 70% of the funds are spent on ADA compliance activities such as sidewalks, handicap ramps/rails, and parking; other uses can be for downtown lighting, curb, gutter and drainage renovations, purchase of land related to the project, so long as the funds are applied to the designated historic district. Mrs. Collier mentioned, like any other grant, a public hearing will be required, and several resolutions will have to be implemented if not so already to be part of the application. The City's plans for the use of the funds would be for the City's downtown area, specifically to address parking, ramps and sidewalks, and possibly additional decorative lighting. Mayor Vera asked if the City applied for the grant, and was not awarded the funds, if the City still had to pay GrantWorks the \$5,000 for the administrative fees. Mrs. Collier confirmed that no costs are charged unless funds are awarded, or those imposed by the Engineer preparing the preliminary designs for the project. Tom Turk, of M&S Engineering, offered to review the City's plans for this project and assist with preliminary designs pro-bono.

- a) Board of Director's Action – Director Treasurer Nichole Bermea made the motion designating a 30% match of \$150,000 for the City to apply for the Downtown Revitalization Program, being \$45,000; and Director Mark Marcum seconds the motion. The motion passed by a 5-0 vote.
- b) City Council Action – Alderman Bluemel made the motion to authorizing the City Administrator to apply for the Texas Department of Agriculture Downtown Revitalization Program Grant with the support of the NMDD's designated match; and Alderman Mike Fernandez seconds the motion. The motion passed by a 5-0 vote.

5) **Adjournment.**

Motion: Alderman Fernandez made the motion to adjourn at 8:00pm, and Alderman Bluemel seconds the motion. Motion passed by a unanimous vote.

Passed and Approved this 20<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2015.

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Ruberta C. Vera, Mayor

Attest:

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Lisa S. Hernandez,  
City Administrator/Secretary