

MINUTES OF REGULAR TELEPHONE CONFERENCE/VIDEO MEETING

February 23, 2021

MONTGOMERY CITY COUNCIL

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Sara Countryman declared a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Present: Sara Countryman Mayor
Carol Langley City Council Place # 1
T.J. Wilkerson City Council Place # 3
Julie Davis City Council Place # 4
Tom Cronin City Council Place # 5

Absent: Kevin Lacy City Council Place #2

Also Present: Richard Tramm City Administrator
Dave McCorquodale Assistant City Administrator
Susan Hensley City Secretary
Alan Petrov City Attorney

INVOCATION

T.J. Wilkerson gave the Invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO FLAGS

VISITOR/CITIZENS FORUM:

Any citizen with business not scheduled on the agenda may speak to the City Council. Prior to speaking, each speaker must be recognized by the Mayor. Council may not discuss or take any action on an item, but may place the issue on a future agenda. The number of speakers along with the time allowed per speaker may be limited.

Mayor Countryman read an email dated February 23, 2021, to City Council members:

I live at 501 Louisa Street in the City of Montgomery. It has recently come to my attention that Chris Cheatham is being allowed to connect his parking lot at 21125 Eva Street to Louisa Street allowing ingress and egress from that commercial location to our street.

I feel strongly that this access onto Louisa will cause several problems. First, the road is in poor condition and additional traffic will deteriorate the road further. Second, because the road is narrow, it is very difficult for two cars to pass each other on that road. Third, during periods of high traffic, it is difficult to exit Louisa headed North onto 105. Fourth, it will cause additional unwanted traffic to the residents on this street. And lastly, our entire street has been unable to receive mail because USPS says they are unable to turn around on our road, they do not have enough room.

I assume Mr. Cheatham has followed all City protocol as it relates to the approval by the City to add this driveway? I am not aware of this issue coming before the Planning and Zoning Committee. I would think the residents living on Louisa would have been notified in writing of this construction and have been given the opportunity to comment before being approved. I would suggest the road be widened and a traffic light be placed at Louisa and 105 before proceeding.

Thank you for your time and attention, Efrain Lucas.

Mayor Countryman said Mr. Amando Nino had asked to speak.

Mr. Nino said he has been a resident for a long time. Mr. Nino said Dobbin is suffering right now as the town does not have hot water. Mr. Nino said the reason the pipes busted, and the hot-water piping is different piping than the cold-water piping is that these pipes, where a fitting usually costs \$0.85 are now costing \$12.95. Mr. Nino said this gouging going on is at an extreme level right now and therefore they are not able to independently fix this. Mr. Nino said they wanted to plead to the City for procurement of these parts on their behalf and bring it back to the public.

Mr. Nino said \$14,000 for walkie-talkies was recently brought to his attention and wanted to know if these are satellite-enabled because they have looked online for \$14,000 worth of walkie-talkies and they cannot find one.

Mr. Nino said he hoped all the elected officials cannot be on the same page regarding the \$10,000 goat costume.

Mr. Nino said if there is \$25,000 extra the Montgomery ISD could use it for emergency relief shelters that are needed annually. Mr. Nino said he has asked around and has not found anyone who could tell him who helps the school with these types of scenarios and that is why he came today.

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Matters related to the approval of minutes of the February 9, 2021, Public Hearing and Regular Meeting.

T.J. Wilkerson moved to approve the minutes of the February 9, 2021, Public Hearing and Regular Meeting. Tom Cronin seconded the motion, the motion carried unanimously. (4-0)

CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION:

2. Consideration and possible action on Department Reports.
 - A. City Administrator's Report – Mr. Tramm said it seems that 2021 is picking up right where 2020 left off. Mr. Tramm said last week's winter storm disaster gave them a very specific set of new challenges they had not seen before. Mr. Tramm said he has lived in Montgomery County virtually his entire life and has never experienced weather like that. Mr. Tramm said one of their first considerations was they expected that level of weather to bring some level of power outages and a couple of department heads including the Mayor had discussions on what that would mean to their community. Mr. Tramm said they opened up communications with Montgomery ISD and inquired about a way to have an overnight shelter. Mr. Tramm said those discussions took place between Saturday and Sunday and they were able to get that coordinated. Mr. Tramm said MISD was very open and bent over backwards to work with the City to open the shelter. Mr. Tramm said the shelter was run both by City and MISD personnel through the week. Mr. Tramm said as a further consideration, Montgomery County Precinct 1 was planning to open up a daytime-only warming center at their Community building on Lone Star Parkway, but due to issues with the generator there, they were unable to do that. Mr. Tramm said they kept Madeley Ranch Elementary School open during the day and at night as an overnight shelter. Mr. Tramm said it was a joint effort where both the City and MISD were instrumental in bringing that together on short notice. Mr. Tramm said he wants to credit MISD

for working with them and helping to make something happen for residents, not just for the City of Montgomery but the greater Montgomery area.

Mr. Tramm said another area where credit is due is the City's Public Works crews who worked hard during the emergency to keep the water treatment facilities operating during the emergency conditions. Mr. Tramm said several areas across the state are under boil water notices because they either completely lost their water production capability, or they had their water pressure drop below a point that required the issuance of a boil water notice. Mr. Tramm said the City's water pressure did get lower than normal, but it never got to the point of having to issue a boil water notice. Mr. Tramm said the reason for that was the staff staying ahead of the problem and sometimes it meant manual operation of facilities to make sure pressure did not drop when some gauges were found to be frozen. Mr. Tramm said he wants to make sure credit is given to Public Works for working in difficult, cold temperatures and frozen precipitation. Mr. Tramm said the City's Utility Department has a cell phone line that was posted to the City's social media for extra communications so they can better dispatch emergency calls to Public Works.

Mr. Tramm said across several departments in the City they had a number of personnel bending over backwards and working in alternative means to keep our internal communications moving so they could have the best response plan possible. Mr. Tramm said he feels like the City did a good job in its response. Mr. Tramm said they are planning an after-action meeting later this week to use their experiences as a base for follow-up on where to take the other emergency plans. Mr. Tramm said in many ways the situation they experienced will have many similar responses to the hurricane response, such as long-term power outages and possible displacement of people. Mr. Tramm said they are looking at taking it to the next level and taking the lessons they have learned here.

Mr. Tramm said he knows there are a lot of questions out there about Entergy and in the next few meetings he is going to extend an invitation for Entergy to come to City Council so they can advise us directly on things that happened and what they are going to do in the future to ensure better, more complete, and continuous electric service. Mr. Tramm said he does not know of an area of the City that did not go without power for a significant time, but at some point, there were a couple of areas in the City that were out of power for almost the entire emergency. Mr. Tramm said a couple of areas he knows were possibly involved in the rolling blackouts. Mr. Tramm said there are a couple of areas he knows Entergy plans to address in

more detail but thinks providing them the direct opportunity to speak to the people of Montgomery and City Council will be good.

Mr. Tramm said in addition to the other work the Police Department did, they did receive word from social media channels there may have been some additional need for some of the population in one of the apartment complexes. Mr. Tramm said and the Police Department contacted people there and made sure if people were needing to be transported to an emergency shelter they could help arrange that or provide other specific needs to help them. Mr. Tramm said when there were calls that came throughout the community the Police Department found a way to get with those people and if there was a need for them to get to a shelter, they were ready to help provide and make sure the need was met.

Mr. Tramm said there is an item on the agenda concerning an installation system for being able to stream meetings in the City Council Chambers. Mr. Tramm said one of the issues with getting back together to have Council meetings live is the small size of the Council Chambers. Mr. Tramm said and they cannot get together in significant numbers that occupy Council, Mayor, staff, and consultants and then have room for the public. Mr. Tramm said by following through with one of these plans they would be able to stream these meetings live so the public could still be able to watch through live video feed.

Mr. Tramm said there were several questions and follow-up related to the Planned Development District that is generally located in the northeast portion of the City. Mr. Tramm said they are looking at scheduling meetings with both City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission, possibly a special joint meeting, so they can make sure all of them are up to speed from a legal and engineering point of view on all the elements of the contracts. Mr. Tramm said there are three different agreements with the original one expiring in 2024. Mr. Tramm said he does not believe there is anyone who is currently on the Planning and Zoning Commission or City Council who were involved with the City at the time these agreements were made and he thinks all of them should be brought up to speed with the information.

Mr. Tramm said with the weather emergency last week it also meant last week was spent primarily responding to emergencies. Mr. Tramm said some things that might have normally been processed for this meeting were not ready so this is a lighter agenda, and they will be catching up with those items in the next couple of weeks. Mr. Tramm said in dealing with staff

and the emergency he tried to make sure everyone knows the primary objective is making sure basic City services are supplied to the residents.

Mayor Countryman said she wanted to praise Public Works and the Police Department. Mayor Countryman said she was out and helping to find shelters and they were all hands-on deck and they did a great job. Mayor Countryman stated Chief Solomon and Mr. Mike Muckleroy did a great job. Mr. Tramm said the most important thing is they found ways to get the job done.

Mr. Tramm said because of broken pipes of many customers' homes there was a huge drag on water production capabilities. Mr. Tramm said their Public Works started by staying on top of everything early and managed to stay ahead of the curve. Julie Davis asked if she heard correctly that the guys were sleeping in the water areas and flipping the switches manually all night long just to make sure everything was working and not frozen. Mr. Tramm said yes because an elevation gauge was frozen which the feed from that gauge tells the well when to go on and off. Mr. Tramm said they had personnel who stayed overnight. Mr. Tramm stated when someone is staying up in a concrete building it is not the most pleasant environment. Mayor Countryman said if she is not mistaken, they did not cool any water coming out of the ground from the hottest well because it was so cold by the time it hit their hands it was tolerable. Mr. Mike Muckleroy said yes that was correct. Mr. Muckleroy said what happened is they blended the two wells instead of the normal process of running it through the cooling tower. Mayor Countryman said it did seem a little hotter than normal.

- B. Public Works Report – Mr. Tramm said two malfunctioned meters were replaced and four work orders for water and sewer taps were completed. Mr. Tramm said Fernland docents reported 793 visitors and 46 tours in January, which he finds remarkable. Mr. Tramm said Public Works also removed and placed in storage all the Christmas decorations from multiple sites in the City.

- C. Police Department Report – Mr. Tramm said there were 198 calls for service in January 2021 which is up from 102 calls in January 2020. Mr. Tramm said four officers attended training during the month and the Police Department is running traffic studies on major roadways and different parts of the City. Mr. Tramm said they are now offering a business watch form on the City's website for businesses that are wanting to have extra patrols and to notify the department of any concerns. Mr. Tramm said this is in addition to the home vacation watch form.

Mr. Tramm said they have partnered with Nixle to get information out to the community as fast as possible. Mr. Tramm said to sign up for text messages regarding emergencies or inclement weather text MOPDALERT to 888777. Mr. Tramm said this information will be going out within the next month via water bills, the signboard, and the social media page. Mr. Tramm said their goal is to be able to get ahead of the hurricane season and that will become an additional way to convey information to the public.

Mayor Countryman asked Chief Solomon how they are handling business owners that want to be escorted to their cars. Chief Solomon said they are handling business requests through the business watch form on the City's website. Chief Solomon said there is also a section where you can list the time of opening and closing and if you would like patrol to come by during closing. Chief Solomon said they have done that with several businesses in Montgomery with AT&T and a couple of businesses outside the City. Chief Solomon said if they have someone outside their place of business they would like them to call 9-1-1 or call the County.

- D. Court Department Report – Mr. Tramm said the collections for December and January are up from the year before and are largely due to catching up from the previous backlog where Court activities were greatly slowed down by the pandemic situation. Mr. Tramm said Court is largely functioning by Zoom to follow the recommended safety protocols for Court operation at this time. Mr. Tramm said they are doing a great job amidst a difficult situation. Julie Davis asked if the Court will be able to utilize the infrastructure being talked about putting in place for the Council Chamber for the Zoom Court. Mr. Tramm said that is something he has not walked through yet with the Court Administrator. Mr. Tramm said he believes they are working on individual computers and thinks they may continue to choose to do that, but generally speaking, his understanding of how the equipment works and to answer the question would be yes. Julie Davis said she was not sure if funding-wise it could be pulled from the budget of Court expenses versus a City funding budget. Mr. Tramm said they could certainly look into it as he had not thought of it from that point of view but is certainly worth a potential consideration.
- E. Utility/Development Report – Mr. Tramm said there is a \$6,000 escrow collection for Panda Express that is coming to the Shoppes of Montgomery location near Starbucks. Mr. Tramm said the 869 water accounts are up 53 accounts in the last 12 months, which is a growth rate of almost seven percent. Mr. Tramm said as everyone is aware there are several developments

on the books and will likely see this same level of increased growth for the next several years. Mr. Tramm said he would like to go back on an annual basis and view the comparison numbers.

Mayor Countryman asked who is collecting hotel tax for Airbnb and if Airbnb collects it or is it up to the individual owners to pay. Mr. Petrov, City Attorney said his understanding is that Airbnb has an agreement with the Comptroller's office to collect it on behalf of their collective properties and he believes it goes through Airbnb to the State Comptroller. Mayor Countryman said they should be able to see Airbnb on their tax report. Mr. Tramm said the hotel taxes show up through a different report other than their regular sales tax report, but he will meet with the bookkeeper to retrieve that report.

- F. Water Report – Mr. Michael Williams, Vice President of H2O Innovation said there were a lot of minor issues. Mr. Williams said the wastewater plant flow for December through January was 6,311,000 gallons, daily peak flow December 31, 2020, was 717,000 gallons, and the average daily flow was 203,600 gallons which is currently 51% of permitted capacity. Mr. Williams said all systems complied with the discharge limitations and effluent monitor reports during January. Mr. Williams said there were eight and a half inches of rainfall recorded. Mr. Williams said they pumped a total of 8,527,000 gallons, total flushing of 1,150,000 gallons with a subtotal of 7,377,000 gallons with 96% accountability. Mr. Williams noted there was a total of 998 connections. Mr. Williams said with the help of Mike Muckleroy and his crew with their immediate response time, he greatly appreciated their efforts in keeping the plants running and the extra hands to help isolate pipes bursting at the plants during the freeze.

Mr. Williams said as Mr. Tramm mentioned earlier, they did not go below the pressure threshold to issue a boil water notice. Mr. Williams said they did have reduced pressure in the system, but they went ahead and had samples pulled to verify everything was good. Mr. Williams said those samples came back negative this afternoon with no bacteria.

- G. Financial Report – Mr. Lasky said in the general operating fund there are almost nine months of reserve from the collection of ad valorem taxes for January. Mr. Lasky said there is 20 months reserve for the MEDC account and a year's worth of reserve in the utility fund. Mr. Lasky said on the account balances they are going to try and purchase some CDs for some of the funds to see if they can get a higher interest rate. Mr. Lasky said for the cash flow on the general fund they did receive some FEMA money for Atkins Creek, roughly \$30,000 of it

which was transferred over from Capital Projects where it was collected from as well as receiving \$246,000 for January sales tax. Mr. Lasky said the ad valorem taxes came in at \$400,000 and stated there was nothing out of the ordinary regarding expenditures. Mr. Lasky said the general fund is doing well on sales tax collected for the first months at \$840,000 and they did receive their biggest amount that he has seen to date for sales tax for February just over \$450,000 and said the City is doing very well. Mr. Lasky said some of the expenditures for personnel and insurance are a bit higher but that is because they had a three-week pay period in December and eventually the amount will start to go down and revert to normal. Mr. Lasky said the miscellaneous expenses are a little higher, as there were a few events that took place mainly in December for the goat naming contest as well as the parade and Light up the Park event. Mr. Lasky said MEDC did contribute money toward those events and it shows as more of a wash on the revenue and expenditures side and most of those will show up on the next report. Mr. Lasky said he completed those transfers a week ago and coming up in February for the March meeting there will be additional revenues that post on the budget. Mr. Lasky said on the utility side regarding the tap fees and inspections there was one larger tap for Eagle Nest apartments so that is the reason it was a bit higher. Mr. Lasky said there were some repairs to Lift Station 14 for Utility Projects and Preventive Maintenance which were higher than normal. Mr. Lasky said the bond payments are coming due and he will send the information to the bank tomorrow to have them paid.

Julie Davis asked if the City is making a provision to cut back on municipal hours this week because they are going to have all this overtime, and do they need to address it in the budget, so they are not cutting their hours. Julie Davis said she feels like they should not slap their hands and would rather pay them the overtime for being there to keep the water plants running and know they are going to be over budget than to force them to cut their hours later in the week and not pay overtime. Mr. Tramm said that is something they do not need to address right now. Mr. Tramm said when they have emergencies that require additional time, people work the additional time and get paid for the time they work, they do not then get sent home on the next available nice day just to keep those hours down. Mr. Tramm said if they want to voluntarily ask for an extra day off he is happy to entertain that, but they do not get punished because they had to work 16-hours one day and taken to task the next where they have work taken away from them for no good reason. Mr. Tramm said there is a time to address this and further down in the fiscal year they will potentially do a mid-year correction with budget adjustments. Mr. Tramm said as Mr. Lasky mentioned earlier, the City had the highest collection for February which is both a monthly and quarterly filing month and includes the

business for December. Mr. Tramm said it was \$92,000 above the total figure for what the City collected the previous February which was \$358,000 to \$450,000. Mr. Tramm said that is just one example of an income being much higher than anticipated and on the other hand there are always expenditures that are higher and lower than anticipated. Mr. Tramm said Public Works always tries to plan in the budget for there being funds that count for emergencies, but it is hard to plan for an emergency. Mr. Tramm said they do not need to take any action on that now, but if it is necessary they will bring it back to Council. Julie Davis said she remembers late last year canceling a heavy trash weekend because of overtime hours. Mr. Tramm said as he recalls the reason the trash was canceled was not to avoid paying overtime hours which they do collect for those days, but it was because the dumpsters were filled earlier than anticipated.

- H. Engineer's Report – Mr. Roznovsky said the Waterline Improvements Project through downtown is still ongoing and they have completed most of the waterline by Cedar Brake Park. Mr. Roznovsky said the area east of the medical building at Houston Street is a temporary waterline that is being installed to connect everyone to. Mr. Roznovsky said while they are doing construction, if the existing line is hit and some places are using the same location as the existing line, the customer will still be able to stay in service. Mr. Roznovsky said they will be meeting with the contractor tomorrow as they will be doing a tie-in at Shepherd Street and the Park. Mr. Roznovsky said the customers on Shepherd Street will be out of service tomorrow night between 10:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. and were given notice this morning that this would occur. Mr. Roznovsky said the contractor has been great to work with.

Mr. Roznovsky said the Baja Road Water and Drainage Improvements will be having their one-year warranty inspection tomorrow morning. Mr. Roznovsky said they are still waiting and working with the Department of Agriculture on the release of final funds which is still pending. Mr. Roznovsky said they are trying to get more information because now they are at the one-year warranty mark and there is still an outstanding balance owed to the City.

Mr. Roznovsky said they have received the contract documents back from the contractor today regarding Water Plant No. 3 Improvements. Mr. Roznovsky said they will do a final review and send them over to the City Attorney for review and have the City execute the contract to get the project started.

Mr. Roznovsky said GLO is ongoing and they have scheduled a follow-up call on Monday with GrantWorks to move the project forward.

Mr. Roznovsky said the closeout of the contract with Lift Station No. 1 is still ongoing and they have been going back and forth with the contractor.

Mr. Roznovsky said this past month they held a one-year warranty inspection for the Atkins Creek Project and had a very small punch list they are working with the contractor to get those items addressed.

Mr. Roznovsky said they did approve plans for Moon Over Montgomery, and they received plans for review from Panda Express and provided comments on the plans. Mr. Roznovsky said they spoke with them today and expect to see revised plans soon.

Mr. Roznovsky said Hills of Town Creek, Section 4, installation of underground utilities has been completed and the contractor is currently working on paving.

Mr. Roznovsky said the Hills of Town Creek, Section 3, and Emma's Way one-year warranty inspections are underway.

Mr. Roznovsky said regarding the Town Creek inspection, TxDOT plans to complete the installation of the rip-rap in the next few weeks.

Mr. Roznovsky said they have a follow-up meeting with Precinct 1 regarding the Kammerer Tract next week to discuss the transportation improvements and they are continuing to move forward on that project.

Mr. Roznovsky said they had a utility meeting regarding the TxDOT Atkins Creek and FM 1097 Project to discuss the location of existing utilities and they are continuing to move forward. Mr. Roznovsky said based on their schedule it is still a 2026 project, but they are trying to get it far enough along so if funding is available they can move it to a sooner date.

Mr. Roznovsky said the FM 149 and SH-105 Right Turn Lane Project is still scheduled for 2021 and construction could begin mid-summer.

Mr. Roznovsky said regarding the water well performance tests, the only well that had an issue, Water Well No. 2 is seeing increased levels of sand production but will not require corrective action at this time. Mr. Roznovsky said both Water Well Nos. 3 & 4 are both operating as intended and there is no action to take.

Mayor Countryman asked if Mr. Roznovsky was worried about the Buffalo Springs Bridge holding up with potholes with the recent weather event. Mr. Roznovsky said they will go out and view it tomorrow. Mr. Roznovsky said the potholes that have occurred in the past are not on the bridge, they are on the approaches and the outside of the bridge, and existing issues pertain to the overlay and existing street, but there is nothing wrong with the bridge structure itself.

Tom Cronin moved to accept the departmental reports as presented. Julie Davis seconded the motion, the motion carried unanimously. (4-0)

3. Consideration and possible action regarding video streaming equipment purchase and installation.

Mr. Tramm said City Council had asked about live streaming meetings back in 2018 to increase civic engagement. Mr. Tramm said staff has researched the topic, especially in light of new technologies available and new popularity with the pandemic guidelines. Mr. Tramm said at the original time it was considered, it was thought to be too great of an expense for the perceived benefit, but over this past year, online meetings have taken a larger role in how we conduct City activities and now play a bigger role in how the public does many things. Mr. Tramm said allowing the public to view City meetings online is now more of an essential service than an option. Mr. Tramm said they do know that although they may have seen a decrease in the number of people who watch these meetings live, they do know people are viewing them through the taped format when it is convenient for their schedule when they are easily available through the City's website.

Mr. Tramm said staff has obtained three proposals for improvements to the AV system in the City Council Chambers. Mr. Tramm said an overview of the proposals is included with the agenda items sent out. Mr. Tramm said the proposals are based on each company's core services and are not equal in what they offer but a spectrum across the board. Mr. Tramm said the key

points to consider are staff involvement level and how automated they want the system to be. Mr. Tramm said if it is a full-service civil system that has almost no input needed from City staff that could be \$30,000 or even more on an annual basis just to run the system in addition to the hardware. Mr. Tramm said, on the other hand, City staff operating the system has staff time costs, but much lower, and is more flexible with their needs.

Mr. Tramm said the second key point to consider is public interaction. Mr. Tramm said broadcasting meetings versus interactive meetings have very different cost and complexity implications. Mr. Tramm said the project was initially seen as a broadcast-only pursuit and platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc. enable all participants to interact in real-time which they have generally come to see as a common feature in meetings. Mr. Tramm said the biggest barrier they would have in combining real-time interactivity with a live stream broadcast is the lag time between the systems and a high cost to find ways to mitigate and work around that lag time if they are hosting an in City, City Council meeting with outside participants trying to participate in a live format.

Mr. Tramm said the final key point is adaptability. Mr. Tramm said two of the proposals come from companies that offer proprietary solutions, which means their computer code is integrated into the system in a way that only they can work on. Mr. Tramm said the third proposal provides a solution using off-the-shelf components that allows complete ownership of the system and operation by the City. Mr. Tramm said this proposal they believe allows for maximum flexibility for changes to the system whether it be a short or long-term future and is expected to work well as they readapt back to meeting live and would still be able to have a live stream format that was originally envisioned back in 2018 even when they have a full audience after the pandemic.

Mr. Tramm said the recommendation from City staff is the presentation by AV Design Pros and allowing the City Administrator to contract with AV Design Pros for a live stream solution for City Hall not to exceed \$30,000. Mr. Tramm said the proposal they provided was \$27,000. Mr. Tramm said Mr. Dave McCorquodale, Assistant City Administrator and Director of Planning and Development was the person who interacted with all the companies and is available for specific questions.

Tom Cronin asked why they can't use the school system Public Chambers as it has been offered. Tom Cronin asked Mr. Petrov, City Attorney if there is a legal reason they cannot use the MISD meeting facilities because it is certainly much bigger than theirs. Mr. Petrov said there would not be a legal reason why the City could not enter into an agreement with the school. Mr. McCorquodale said often school board meetings do seem to coincide with the City Council meetings and he presumes if they would be the one asking it would be the City changing their meeting dates. Tom Cronin said to save \$35,000 he has no problem with that. Tom Cronin asked if they thought they would get a return on this. Tom Cronin said they have five additional people tonight and do they think more people are going to tune in because they have high-dollar AV equipment. Mr. Tramm said what they do know is some people are tuning in not necessarily live but are tuning into the recorded broadcast from the City's website on their schedule. Mr. Tramm said the one downside he would have about meeting in a school building is if there was any need for City staff to go back and pull written materials they would not have that ability, but that does not happen very often. Mr. Tramm said they could also just continue with meetings as they are conducting them now. Mr. Tramm said if Council wants him to approach MISD and have more significant discussions with them about using their chambers, he would certainly be very happy to do that. Tom Cronin said it does not cost anything so why not just inquire and see if there might be a workaround to this expensive proposal. Julie Davis asked if Mr. Tramm can clarify the other cities such as City of Willis or City of Conroe if they have similar equipment to the proposed AV equipment. Mr. Tramm said he knows specifically what the City of Conroe has, and they utilize the Swagit system as does one other local government the Lone Star Groundwater Conservation District for Montgomery County. Mr. Tramm said it is a higher-priced system and is more fully-featured. Julie Davis asked if there is a way to bear this burden across everyone that would be using this equipment like Planning and Zoning, MEDC, Court costs versus it all being put on the City. Julie Davis said she understands it is coming out of the budget no matter what but is there a way to share the burden versus it all coming out of one account. Mr. McCorquodale said Planning and Zoning does not have a budget so it would certainly be on the City. Mr. Tramm said MEDC does have a separate budget and the Court budget is separate within the City system. Mr. Tramm said they could spend the time to determine how it would be used and how it could be a portion to cross different budget elements and bring it back to City Council at an upcoming meeting.

Julie Davis asked what the timeline is to have this system installed. Mr. Tramm said if they went with AV Design Pros they would expect to have it up and running by the first meeting of April if not, the second meeting of March. Mayor Countryman said Zoom is free but at the same time they need to get back into Council Chambers and still be able to project to those that cannot make it to the meeting and be mobile like Commission's Court or even the City of Conroe, that is the objective. Tom Cronin said he would love to get back in the Council Chambers, but he does not think they need this kind of luxury. Tom Cronin said he thinks they should figure out something a lot more cost-effective. Mr. Tramm said if Council wishes, they would be happy to go back to the drawing board and look at other alternatives.

Mr. McCorquodale said he is very frugal by nature, but you cannot find a \$2,000-\$3,000 solution that requires a \$60,000 a year IT person to be able to run the system. Mr. McCorquodale said that is the difference between the services that are offered and the expertise in-house to run the system. Mr. McCorquodale said he thought we could install a webcam on the ceiling and just run Zoom and everything would be fine. Mr. McCorquodale said he found after researching it that if you do not have the in-house expertise to set it up and operate it when it stops working you do not have anything. Julie Davis said in the tech world \$30,000 is not a huge amount, although it is a huge number to bear upfront. Julie Davis said her husband does tech for a living and services the City of Willis and she knows what their number is and what they paid for their system, but they are still looking at a way less number at \$30,000. Mayor Countryman asked if this would improve the acoustics in the Chambers. Mr. McCorquodale said almost \$4,000 of the system is a needed audio improvement. Mr. McCorquodale said close to \$4,000 of the \$26,000 is for new microphones and a new audio mixer in the Council Chambers. Mr. McCorquodale said whether or not the Council decides to live stream, the audio in the room itself needs to be upgraded. Mayor Countryman said she has heard that from people and when she has sat out in the audience as well, there have been a lot of people having a hard time hearing what is being discussed and those microphones are 50/50 if they are going to work. Mayor Countryman said if they do not work it is very hard to hear in Council Chambers.

Julie Davis moved to accept the recommendation to authorize the City Administrator to contract with the AV Design Pros for a City Hall live stream solution not to exceed \$30,000.

Tom Cronin asked if they were going to allow Mr. Tramm to speak with the school system. Julie Davis said she does not want to borrow a system. Tom Cronin said he is talking about using their public facilities. Julie Davis asked if they are going to change their meeting dates because they meet on the same date. Tom Cronin said Mr. Tramm needs to speak with them and said he knows one date in the month MISD does not meet the same time as they do. Mayor Countryman asked if Tom Cronin is suggesting doing this one time a month and go and do that another time a month. Tom Cronin said no he would like to table it and have Mr. Tramm bring back more information. Mr. Tramm said he will do what Council directs and wants him to do. Mr. Tramm said if Council wants him to approach MISD about utilizing their location for Planning and Zoning, City Council, and MEDC meetings then he will be happy to do that. Tom Cronin said they need to find out how many people it would accommodate.

Carol Langley seconded the motion, the motion carried with the following votes:

Carol Langley – Aye

Tom Cronin - Nay

Julie Davis – Aye

T.J. Wilkerson – Nay

Mayor Countryman cast the tie-breaking vote by voting Aye. The motion carried with 3-Ayes and 2-Nays. (3-2)

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

The City Council reserves the right to discuss any of the items listed specifically under this heading or for any items listed above in executive closed session as permitted by law including if they meet the qualifications in Sections 551.071(consultation with attorney), 551.072 (deliberation regarding real property),551.073 (deliberation regarding gifts), 551.074 (personnel matters), 551.076 (deliberation regarding security devices), and 551.087 (deliberation regarding economic development negotiations) of Chapter 551 of the Government Code of the State of Texas.

COUNCIL INQUIRY:

Pursuant to Texas Government Code Sect. 551.042 the Mayor and Council Members may inquire about a subject not specifically listed on this Agenda. Responses are limited to the recitation of existing policy or a statement of specific factual information given in response to the inquiry. Any deliberation or decision shall be limited to a proposal to place on the agenda of a future meeting.

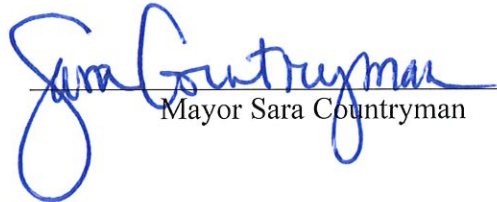
Discussion: Mr. Tramm said he wanted to point out to Council, which he neglected to mention in the utility report, that due to several City residents/utility customers who had broken pipes may have experienced a significant water loss related to the freeze. Mr. Tramm said he has instructed City staff to gather the information if they contact the City related to higher-than-normal water bills for consideration of credits. Mr. Tramm said he does have discretion in the matter and is going to be looking more closely for City residents that may need some assistance because of where the freeze caused unexpected water loss due to broken pipes. Mr. Tramm said he wanted to make Council aware that he would be considering those on a case-by-case basis. Mr. Tramm said having an electronic metering system allows them to identify when leaks occurred and they can time stamp them back to being related to this specific freeze event.

Julie Davis asked Mayor Countryman if there was any update from Mr. Robert Walker concerning the Lone Star Community Center and the backup generator not working and what Precinct 1 responsibility is to get it working so this does not happen again during hurricane season. Mayor Countryman said she spoke with Mr. Walker yesterday and they are going to have a meeting with the Police Chief and Mr. Tramm to discuss the matter. Mayor Countryman said during this whole storm they had plans A, B, C, and D and they ended up going to G, H, and I. Mayor Countryman said it was great they were able to provide shelter and had a plan, but what she learned through all of this is no church in town has a generator, Margaritaville does not have a generator and neither do any of the schools in town. Mayor Countryman said they hope that Commissioner Walker will go into partnership with the City. Mayor Countryman said they have an idea they are going to propose, and he is willing to sit down and talk. Julie Davis asked if it is an urgent matter they are pushing before hurricane season. Mayor Countryman said most definitely. Mr. Tramm said hurricane season and beating that with any updates for planning and responsiveness is high on their priority list. Mayor Countryman said the high school has two generators, but one generator was down so they could potentially use that. Mayor Countryman said in the end they were able to provide good shelter and they were not overrun. Mr. Tramm said he knows in his conversations with the Superintendent that he and MISD learned several items about their emergency capabilities as well, and they will be working with them as they improve the City's plans going forward and knows they will be working to improve the school district plans as well. Mr. Tramm said they are going to be communicating closely in how both parties can improve cooperatively together. Mr. Tramm said they want to have locations that are closer here to the City than what they have now. Julie Davis said just to clarify they have no control over Entergy and as a City that is the provider they have.

ADJOURNMENT

Julie Davis moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 p.m. Tom Cronin seconded the motion, the motion carried unanimously. (4-0)

Submitted by:  Date Approved: 03/09/2021
Susan Hensley, City Secretary


Mayor Sara Countryman

