

**RICHLAND HILLS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 22, 2021
MINUTES**

Roll Call:

Council present

Edward Lopez, Mayor
Douglas Knowlton, Place 1
Stacey L. Morse, Place 2
Curtis A Bergthold, Mayor Pro Tem
Javier Alvarez, Place 4
Athena Campbell, Place 5

Council absent

Staff present

Candice Edmondson, City Manager
Cathy Bourg, City Secretary

Staff present via Zoom

James Donovan, City Attorney

The Work Session and Regular Session is open to the public and citizens are welcome to attend. However, due to the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in our area and in an effort to abide by social distancing recommendations, we encourage citizens wishing to participate in the meeting to email your comment to City Secretary Cathy Bourg at cbourg@richlandhills.com by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, February 22nd. Your comment will be read aloud during Item 1C *Citizen Appearances/Public Comments*. If you would like to join and participate in the meeting by video conference or phone, you may do so via the following options:

- **Online via Zoom:** Go to zoom.us, Join a Meeting, and enter Meeting 831 6501 5800 and the host will allow you to enter the virtual meeting. The host will ask you what item you would like to speak on, and you will be called upon when that item is presented to address the City Council.
- **By Phone:** Please call (346) 248-7799 and enter Meeting ID 831 6501 5800 and provide your name and address. The host will ask you what item you would like to speak on, and you will be called upon when that item is presented to address the City Council.

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION – 6:00 PM

1. **Executive Session: Pursuant to the Open Meetings Act, Chapter 551, Texas Government Code, Sec. 551.071, Sec. 551.072, Sec. 551.073, Sec. 551.074, Sec. 551.076, Sec. 551.087 and Sec. 418.0183 (f) and 418.106 (d) & (e) of the Texas Government Code (Texas Disaster Act). Refer to posted list attached hereto and incorporated herein.**

None

2. Winter Storm Recap

Candice Edmondson, City Manager presented the following winter storm recap:

Winter Storm Uri was forecasted to impact the Dallas-Fort Worth area from February 13 – February 17. The storm was expected to bring record low temperatures, blizzard like conditions and several inches of snow and ice accumulation.

In preparation for the event, staff took measures to winterize our city facilities, pump houses, fleet vehicles and equipment. All water tanks were filled, plans were in place to clear and sand roadways, and accommodations were made for first responders to stay at local hotels, so that they would not have to travel back and forth in the inclement weather. City staff sent notice to several of our large property management companies and reminded them to keep the heat on in their buildings for the next week in an effort to keep the fire suppression systems from freezing. In addition, staff coordinated with Haltom City on the opening of a warming shelter at the Christian Center that would be available to individuals in our communities who needed a warm place to stay.

Winter Storm Uri blew into our area overnight on Sunday, February 14 with a heavy snow falling throughout the day. By Monday morning, most of the state was blanketed in heavy snow and ice that was putting pressure on our power grid and electric systems. ERCOT announced the initiation of rolling blackouts to try to stabilize the state's energy grid. Non-emergency city facilities were closed on Monday in observance of the President's Day holiday, but we received numerous reports of rolling blackouts and prolonged power outages across our community including at the city complex and our well sites. We also received notice that Fort Worth had lost power to the water plant at Eagle Mountain Lake and that the water plant at Village Creek, which helps supplement our water system, was experiencing icing issues. Cities across the metroplex started opening additional warming centers to help shelter the influx of residents who were now without power and facing exposure risks due to the dangerously low temperatures. Our Police and Fire personnel responded to several calls from residents needing assistance getting to a warming center. North Fort Worth and their customer cities that rely on the Eagle Mountain plant had to issue boil water notices due to the power loss to their water system.

The situation continued to deteriorate on Tuesday with more residents and businesses experiencing prolonged power outages and facing record breaking low wind chills. The city complex and our well sites were still without power, and the Fire Station and Police Department were working off emergency backup generators. Road conditions were hazardous with icy patches along the roadways and traffic signals were out across the city due to the power outages. Due to the continued threat imposed by the low temperatures, warming centers opened at the Masonic Lodge and Calvary Lutheran Church to help shelter residents without power.

The city started to experience a decrease in water pressure with the water pumps being down and unable to push water from our wells through the system. In addition, Fort Worth

was decreasing the water supply to their customers in an effort to keep their water systems functioning; therefore, we could not get more water from Fort Worth to supplement our needs. Due to the low water pressure, we issued a precautionary Boil Water Notice for the entire city. Though there was no evidence of water contamination, any time a water system experiences low water pressure (measured at less than 20psi) there is a chance that the water pipes have been exposed to ground water intrusion. Boiling water is the only way to ensure it is safe for consumption. While staff had added additional heaters to the well pump houses trying to keep the pumps, valves and pipes from freezing, the prolonged power outages at these sites severely impacted our ability to supply water to the Richland Hills community. Staff requested generator's through the state's emergency response system, but because of the storm's statewide impact, none were available. The city's well sites cannot run off portable backup generators but require large, industrial sized generators in order to operate.

A second round of winter weather hit our area Tuesday evening into Wednesday morning. This brought additional snow, ice and low temperatures already impacting hard hit areas. Power was starting to be restored to some areas of Richland Hills including the city complex, but many areas including our well sites, remained without power. Staff was in continual communication with our Oncor representative, but they couldn't provide much of an update as to when power would be fully restored. The Boil Water Notice issued on Tuesday had been posted on the City's website, social media pages and shared with local media channels. However, since many were still without power, the Police Department coordinated a door-to-door effort to inform residents and businesses of the boil water requirement. On Wednesday, February 17, Mayor Lopez issued a Declaration of Local Disaster due to the impacts of Winter Storm Uri. This followed the disaster declarations issued by Governor Abbott and Tarrant County Judge Glen Whitley. The declaration of local disaster will assist Richland Hills in securing the supplies and equipment needed to effectively respond to and recover from this severe weather event.

By Wednesday evening, a couple of our well sites were receiving a little bit of power but were still not operating at full strength. This was allowing some water to flow back into our system. Fort Worth was also starting to increase the water flow from their system which was helping to restock our water tanks. We were seeing power restored to more properties across the city, but this also resulted in more reports of water leaks and fire suppression system breaks. This was to be expected as the temperatures warmed and water in the pipes began to expand and contract.

Public Works staff continued their efforts in getting the water system restored on Thursday. With our water tanks slowing filling up, crews were preparing to start the sanitization process in order to collect samples to send to the labs for testing. The city was able to secure cases of bottled water and the Fire Department began water distribution to our residents. Temperatures remained below freezing and some roadways were still covered in ice, so non-emergency city facilities remained closed for the rest of the week.

Public Works staff completed final preparations for water testing on Friday. With storage tanks full, staff was able to work overnight Friday on sanitizing the system. Preliminary

water samples were taken on Saturday and submitted to the labs for testing. The Fire Department acquired additional pallets of bottled water and continued water distribution to our residents on Friday and Sunday.

On Sunday around 12:30 PM, the city was notified that our water samples were clear, and we could lift the Boil Water Notice. The rescinded notice was posted on the City's website and social media pages.

Communication about the winter weather event and impacts to city services was posted on the homepage of the City's website and Facebook page. Updates about the water system issues and boil water notice were posted daily on the City's Facebook page. We are thankful to the many residents and councilmembers who helped share this information on personal and community social media pages. I would also like to thank members of our Police Department and city staff who went door-to-door to help distribute the boil water notice during the power outages.

City staff is in the process of finalizing a community alert system that will allow us to call, email and text residents with important information during emergency incidents. The Nixel system was acquired several months ago and staff is at the point where they are ready to start collecting contact information from citizens to be added to the system. Unfortunately, this severe weather event occurred before the system was up and running, but you will be seeing more information about how to sign up for notifications within the next month.

This was a very challenging week for our city, but we were not alone in these issues. Cities across the state were dealing with severe winter weather, freezing temperatures, prolonged power outages and water shortages. Many cities across the metroplex had to issue boil water notices as their water infrastructure struggled under the extreme temperatures and loss of power.

As always, our first responders rose to the call during this emergency event rendering aide to those in need and making sure our residents were healthy and safe. Our Police Department helped residents get to warming centers, monitored the weather and road conditions, conducted welfare checks, and went door to door passing out boil water notices during the power outages.

Our Fire Department responded to over 100 emergency calls, assisted businesses with fire suppression system leaks, and organized and distributed bottled water to those in need.

Our Public Works Department, the true heroes of this winter weather event, worked day and night getting our water system operational. They worked tirelessly trying to get power back to our well sites, repairing broken pumps and water lines, responding to emergency water breaks, and sanitizing and testing our entire system. And when they weren't focused on our water issues, they were clearing and sanding the roadways to make them safe. During this time, Public Works crews have responded to over 400 service calls for

water shut offs due to damaged pipes with more expected in the coming days as temperatures continue to rise.

City Manager Edmondson concluded her recap by stating that it was a really hard week, but this is why we do this job. We are called to serve our communities, help others, improve the places we live. I am forever grateful to the men and women I serve with every day. Words cannot express how proud I am of the work they did this week.

Mayor Lopez read aloud the following emailed comments and questions from John Skier: I want to thank everyone who contributed to restoring the city water supply and to those who contributed to keeping our community safe providing water, power, and outreach. Questions the event has raised: A) The boil water notice suggest we have 3 wells, but website says different how many wells do we have, how many work? B) When did we stop getting water from Ft Worth? C) Do we have a policy for communicating updates to citizens via website or social media? If so, what is it? D) Why did the city abandon a notification system to notify residents of issues. E) Not RH Specific, why do the mains break when they are well below frost line? Welcome your responses and again thank you to all everyone who took action during this event to protect lives and property. John Skier 7016 Park Place Dr., Richland Hills.

Candice Edmondson, City Manager and Scott Mitchell, Director of Neighborhood Services provided information regarding the Mr. Skiers questions.

Stacy Reddy, 7012 Hardisty Street made comments regarding last week's weather event. She volunteered in the efforts to deliver boil water notices to residents and covered five blocks. She congratulated staff for all their hard work during the winter storm.

Mayor Lopez discussed the rolling blackouts and power outages experienced and expressed that the City's water well sites and nursing homes should not be affected by power outages. He discussed the need to partner with other cities to voice our concerns to our local representatives. Mayor Lopez would like to have a Resolution drafted in support of legislation to prohibit electricity providers from discontinuing power to nursing homes, city water well sites and other critical infrastructure.

Council discussed ways to improve communication with our citizens and other agencies during an event such as Winter Storm Uri.

3. Discuss items and presentations listed on tonight's City Council Agenda.

Candice Edmondson, City Manager presented the following agenda item:

7C. Discuss Budget Workshop Date

At the February 8, 2020 meeting, City Council selected Saturday, March 27th as the best date for the Budget Workshop. As noted later in the meeting, this is the date of the City's Easter event. City Council and staff discussed other possible dates and decided on Friday, March 26th from 9:00 a.m. to noon.

Mayor Lopez called for a break at 6:37 p.m.

REGULAR SESSION – Mayor Lopez Called to Order – Time 7:00 p.m.

Invocation – Councilmember Knowlton

1. PRESENTATIONS

A. Employee Service Awards

Candice Edmondson, City Manager presented the bio for a 10-year Service Award for Stephanie Flores, Library Public Service Manager.

Mayor Lopez presented 5-year Service Awards to Christian Gayton, Patrol Sergeant and Diane Schmid, Sergeant.

B. Life-Saving Awards

Mayor Lopez presented Life-Saving Awards to Officer Nestor Escalante, Officer Daniel Winchester and Officer Daniel Sawyer for their heroic efforts and service to the community.

C. Citizen Appearances/Public Comments

Citizen comments emailed to Cathy Bourg (cbourg@richlandhills.com) on an item either listed on this agenda or not listed on this agenda will be heard at this time. Citizens in attendance at the meeting who have signed a card to speak to the City Council will also be heard at this time. In compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, unless the subject matter of the presentation is on the agenda, the city staff and City Council members are prevented from discussion of the subject and may respond only with statements of factual information or existing city policy. Public comment will not be taken on items that the Council has previously considered in a public hearing.

None

CONSENT AGENDA

2A. Approve minutes from the February 8, 2021 City Council Regular Meeting

Motion: Motion was made by Councilmember Knowlton and seconded by Councilmember Bergthold to approve the consent agenda.

Motion carried by a vote of 5-0.

PUBLIC HEARINGS, MEETINGS, AND OTHER RELATED ITEMS

3A. None

ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS AND OTHER RELATED ITEMS

4A. None

CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, BID AWARDS AND OTHER RELATED ITEMS

5A. None

OTHER ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

6A. Consider acceptance of Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for Fiscal Year ended September 30, 2020.

Daniel Hungerford of George, Morgan and Sneed, P.C. presented the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) of the City of Richland Hills, Texas, for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2020.

Motion: Motion was made by Councilmember Campbell and seconded by Councilmember Knowlton to acceptance of Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for Fiscal Year ended September 30, 2020.

Motion carried by a vote of 5-0.

Candice Edmondson, City Manager acknowledged Terry Leake, Interim Finance Director for her efforts in maintaining the financial stability and status of the City's funds. This will be Terry's last week with the City, and she will be greatly missed.

City Manager Edmondson thanked Council for their direction, guidance and policies put in place to help create a strong fund and financial position for the City.

REPORTS & DISCUSSIONS

7A. Fire Station Project Update

Russel Shelley, Fire Chief presented a construction update on the Fire Station Project.

Recent Progress

- CMU block for the truck bays is complete
- Structural steel and roof decking for the living quarters is complete
- Brick on south end of the building is complete
- Framing of exterior walls in the living quarters is underway

Next Steps (March)

- Structural steel in truck bays
- Roof decking in truck bays
- Interior wall framing

- MEP rough in work
- Install the roof

Project Budget

- The pay application for January totaled: \$402,864
- To date, we have expended \$1,878,437
- This is 34.5% of the Guaranteed Maximum Price of \$5,445,843

7B. Police Station Project Update

Kim Sylvester, Police Chief provided a construction update on the Police Station Project.

Project Updates

- Door frames being installed
- Finishing out power and data revisions
- Above ceiling inspection this week or next and then ceiling tiles will be installed
- Tape and bedding has began
- Tile flooring starting this week or next
- Cabinets being delivered soon
- No damage from winter weather but sprinkler lines were drained as a precaution and need to be recharged
- Preliminary date of May 25, 2021 for building turn-over

Project Funds Paid

- \$35,982.43 on 11-16-2020
- \$36,835.82 on 12-14-2020
- \$145,334.65 on 01-25-2021
- \$95,152.46 on 02-08-2021

7C. Discuss Budget Workshop Date

Item was discussed during the Work Session under item #2.

COMMUNITY INTEREST ITEMS

- Senior Lunch Bunch Curbside – Rescheduled from February 11 to this Thursday, February 25; 12 noon – 1 PM in The Link Parking Lot. Free for seniors 55 and older. Advanced registration is required and spots are limited. Times are 12 noon to 12:30 PM or 12:30 PM to 1PM. Serving Chick-Fil-A. Beep Beep Bingo will follow, weather permitting.
- Tarrant County Food Pantry - Thursday, March 11; 5:30 PM – 7PM in The Link Parking Lot. Free groceries for any Tarrant County resident provided curbside at The Link's parking lot. Sponsored by Trinity Point Church.
- Hippy Hope Car Stop - Saturday, March 27, 9 AM – 11:30 AM in The Link Parking Lot. Registration is now open for this year's City Easter Event. Advanced registration is required, and spaces are limited so please sign-up soon. Registration is free.

- Vax Shack at the Animal Shelter – 4th Thursday of each month
- Council thanked City Manager Edmondson for keeping expenses down during the pandemic and for doing an excellent job in handling the Winter Storm Uri event.

8. **Executive Session: Pursuant to the Open Meetings Act, Chapter 551, Texas Government Code, Sec. 551.071, Sec. 551.072, Sec. 551.073, Sec. 551.074, Sec. 551.076, Sec. 551.087 and Sec. 418.0183 (f) and 418.106 (d) & (e) of the Texas Government Code (Texas Disaster Act).**

None

9. **A motion was made by Councilmember Knowlton and seconded by Councilmember Morse to adjourn.**

Motion carried by a vote of 5-0.

There being no further business to come before the City Council, Mayor Lopez declared the meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

ATTEST

APPROVED

Cathy Bourg, City Secretary

Edward Lopez, Mayor