

**RICHLAND HILLS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 8, 2021
MINUTES**

Roll Call:

Council present

Edward Lopez, Mayor
Douglas Knowlton, Place 1

Curtis A Bergthold, Mayor Pro Tem
Javier Alvarez, Place 4
Athena Campbell, Place 5

Staff present

Candice Edmondson, City Manager
Cathy Bourg, City Secretary

Council present via Zoom

Stacey L. Morse, Place 2

Staff present via Zoom

Betsy Elam, 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, March 8th. Your comment will be read aloud during Item 1A *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 ID 890 3297 1698 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 890 3297 1698 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.**

Motion: Motion was made by Councilmember Campbell and seconded by Councilmember Knowlton to convene into executive session. Time: 6:04 p.m.

Motion carried by a vote of 5-0.

Mayor Lopez reconvened into open session. Time: 6:56

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

None

Mayor Lopez called for a break at 6:56 p.m.

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

Invocation – Mayor Lopez

1. PRESENTATIONS

A. 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.

Dustin Hamilton, 101 Andrea Ct., Lewisville on behalf of 7912 Leslie Dr., Richland Hills asked questions regarding the Building Code. Has the City of Richland Hills adopted the 2018 ICC Code? Does the City enforce the Code? Based on the photos provided, did the previous decking adhere to the 2018 ICC Code?

CONSENT AGENDA

2A. Approve minutes from the February 22, 2021 City Council Regular Meeting

Motion: Motion was made by Councilmember Knowlton and seconded by Councilmember Morse 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. Consider Resolution 533-21 to the Texas State Legislature in support of legislation to prohibit electricity providers from selectively disrupting or discontinuing power supply to other critical infrastructure such as assisted living, skilled nursing and long-term care facilities; regional water districts; water treatment plants; sewer treatment plants; pump stations; sewer lift stations; and other public water systems

Mayor Lopez discussed Resolution 533-21 to the Texas State Legislature in support of legislation to prohibit electricity providers from selectively disrupting or discontinuing power supply to other critical infrastructure such as assisted living, skilled nursing and long-term care facilities; regional water districts; water treatment plants; sewer treatment plants; pump stations; sewer lift stations; and other public water systems.

Motion: Motion was made by Councilmember Alvarez and seconded by Councilmember Knowlton to approve Resolution 533-21 in support of legislation to prohibit electricity providers from selectively disrupting or discontinuing power supply to other critical infrastructure such as assisted living, skilled nursing and long-term care facilities; regional water districts; water treatment plants; sewer treatment plants; pump stations; sewer lift stations; and other public water systems.

Motion carried by a vote of 5-0.

4B. Consider Resolution 534-21 Continuation of Declaration of Local Disaster – February 2021 Winter Storm

Candice Edmondson, City Manager presented Resolution 534-21, a Continuation of Declaration of Local Disaster – February 2021 Winter Storm. The Resolution recommends continuing the declaration until terminated by order of the City Council so that it remains in effect throughout the entire recovery process.

Motion: Motion was made by Councilmember Knowlton and seconded by Councilmember Morse to approve Resolution 534-21 continuing the Declaration of Local Disaster for the February 2021 Winter Storm.

Motion carried by a vote of 5-0.

CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, BID AWARDS AND OTHER RELATED ITEMS

5A. None

OTHER ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

6A. Consider approval of disaster relief assistance for citizens recovering from damages caused by the February 2021 winter storms

Candice Edmondson, City Manager presented recommendations for disaster relief assistance for citizens recovering from damages caused by the February 2021 winter storms. As a result of the property damage caused by the winter storms, staff has prepared recommendations for disaster relief assistance for Council consideration.

Recommendations include:

- waiving plumbing, inspection and fire suppression system repair permit fees (with proof of repair submitted to Utility Billing)
- postponing water disconnects
- waiving utility bill late fees

The fee waivers and water disconnects would be available through April 16, 2021.

As part of standard operating procedures, Utility Billing already offers payment plans to any customer who is unable to pay their utility bill in full. The City also has a Leak Adjustment Policy allowing for adjustments to customer accounts due to high water usage caused by an underground leak or anomaly. Any customer experiencing a high utility bill that meets the criteria of the Leak Adjustment Policy would be eligible for an adjustment to their account. The policy has been attached to this memo for your review.

Mayor Pro Tem Bergthold addressed the Citizens of Richland Hills, Mayor, City Council and City Staff regarding social media post during the winter event with the following statement:

During the recent climate event experienced by all of us, numerous posts were made on social media regarding helpful measures, personal assistance, notifying residents as well as advice to drip water from household faucets to avoid plumbing lines from freezing.

Most of you experienced water and power outages that were down for an extended length of time. After about 22 hours electricity was restored, but water was not. As you know, the city ordered a boil water order for water. Eventually water was restored, but many residents experienced damage due to frozen pipes. My home was one that had to have repairs.

While social media can be a useful tool to get information out to our fellow citizens, it can also be used in a way that could compromise the process the city has in place to address this crisis.

On February 27, 2021, a comment was posted on Richland Hills Residents Page, Richland Hills Community Page and Richland Hills Alive Page and Nextdoor. The author of the post mentioned three city council members that would probably be in support of a plan to credit 2000 gallons of water for each residence.

People read this comment that was up for several days and some residents felt there was discussion between the city council members and the author. I contacted the author of the comment and said I had not been contacted prior to the words being written and posted. After consideration of what I said, the author removed the names. The problem is that the perception by many people was that we were probably in support of the authors plan to reduce the water bill of all residences by 2000 gallons to aid in their cost to drip water.

This is important: the fact is that according to the federal governments USGS department website if you have five faucets that drip 60 drips per minute you only use 28.5 gallons a day. If you dripped five faucets for three days, you would be using only 85.5 gallons total. This is very different than a forgiveness of 2000 gallons.

I was put in a position to go along with a plan that was not accurate and could potentially damage the plans the city has for infrastructure repair.

As a city council member, we are not allowed to discuss city business with more than one person on city council.

I want to make this point perfectly clear; I did not discuss this plan with any other city council members.

If you would like to discuss this, please see me after the meeting or contact me by phone or email which are on the city website.

Thank you.

Motion: Motion was made by Councilmember Bergthold and seconded by Councilmember Campbell to approve the disaster relief assistance outlined in the staff memo dated March 8, 2021 for citizens recovering from damages caused by the February 2021 winter storms.

Motion carried by a vote of 5-0.

REPORTS & DISCUSSIONS

7A. Street Improvement Projects Update

Scott Mitchell, Director of Neighborhood Services provided an update on street improvement projects. The current approved projects for FY 20-21 are approaching the end of the engineering phase. The following are the street projects:

- 3600 Block of Chaffin – minor utility work required; some roadbed reconstruction/grading required.
- Rosebud/Lavon from Pine Park to Cecil Dr. – all underground utilities must be replaced, drainage issues addressed, complete roadbed reconstruction. This will be most involved project this FY due to utilities and drainage.

- Vance Road – partner project with Tarrant County. This requires some underground utility replacement as well as roadbed reconstruction. Will require coordination with Tarrant County.
- Dreeben – Tarrant County / BISD project, but City will take an active oversight role to insure proper completion of the roadway. Scheduled for mid to late summer.

The previous timeline was for engineering to be completed, bid package to be put together with bids going out in March and bids let in April with a 30-day mobilization. Due to the impacts of Covid-19 and the addition of some utility work requirements on Vance, the timeline has been slightly delayed. Currently we plan to advertise the bids in early April with coming to Council the first meeting in May for award. Construction should begin in early June, with construction of the projects being completed by the end of the fiscal year barring any major weather (or other unforeseen) impacts.

The winter storm, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, has slowed progress slightly, but the projects are still online to be complete by mid to late Fall, 2021.

7B. January Department Reports

Candice Edmondson, City Manager highlighted the following January Department Reports:

- Library – Nailed It! Baking Challenge
- Police – Officer Cristian Velasquez was hired and began mini-academy training and Patrol made two arrests relating to recent stolen vehicles and burglary of motor vehicle offenses. Since these offenders were taken into custody, we have seen a decrease in these offenses.
- Animal Services – Vax Shack Mobile Vet Clinic, 52 pets were spayed/neutered and additionally over 30 pets were vaccinated during the vaccination clinic.
- Community Development – Building Permits continue during pandemic as well as new business activity.
- Parks and Recreation – Camp Connect and Link Learner's Academy (LLA) and rentals have increased. Creek Trail Park will be receiving the new playground in March.

COMMUNITY INTEREST ITEMS

- Senior Lunch Bunch Curbside - Thursday, March 11th 12 noon – 1 PM; 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 Dickie's BBQ. Followed by Beep Beep Bingo at 1pm in The Link parking lot. 5 games will be played, so honk your horn if you win to get prizes.
- Tarrant County Food Pantry - Thursday, March 11th 5:30 PM – 7PM; The Link Parking Lot. Free groceries for any Tarrant County resident provided curbside at The Link's parking lot. Sponsored by Trinity Point Church.

- Easter EGGscursion - Friday, March 19th – Sunday, March 28; Find the giant eggs in our city parks and submit your Clue Coloring Card to be entered to win fun prizes. Each Entry 12 years old and younger receives a dozen Easter Eggs. Find more information at TheLinkRec.com.
 - Hippity Hop Car Stop - Saturday, March 27th 9 AM – 11:30 AM; The Link Parking Lot. Registration is now open. Advanced registration is required and spaces are limited. All time slots are filled with the exception of 9:00 AM and 9:30 AM. Registration is free.
 - Vax Shack at the Animal Shelter – March 25th - 4th Thursday of each month
 - Richland Hills COVID-19 Policy – There will be no changes to the Senior Programs. The City will amend its policy slightly while continuing to follow the recommendations of the CDC guidelines, but without the State mask mandate requirement. We will be going to a recommended mask wearing policy for visitors and guest at city facilities. Employees will still be required to wear mask, we will continue with our cleaning and sanitation, offering our sanitation stations and will continue to follow social distancing guidelines at all public meetings.
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 Bergthold 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