

STATE OF TEXAS

COUNTY OF McCULLOCH

CITY OF BRADY

The City Council of the City of Brady, Texas met in a Work Session Meeting on Monday, July 17, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. with Mayor Aaron Garcia presiding. Council Members present were Missi Elliston, Larry Land, Gabe Moreno, Jeffrey Sutton and Felix Gomez, Jr. City staff present were City Manager Erin Corbell, Public Works Director Steven Miller, Finance Director Lisa McElrath, Fire Chief Lloyd Perrin, and City Secretary Tina Keys. Also in attendance was James Griffin.

1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL & CERTIFICATION OF A QUORUM

Mayor Garcia called the meeting to order at 12:32 p.m. Council quorum was certified during morning joint session.

2.

Erin Corbell said she is working on the interlocal agreement for the VFD, and she is still waiting for a bid for Municipal Court building and is waiting for Steven Miller to get back with her on the air conditioner for senior center. Council Member Land said he wanted to walk over and look at the air conditioning situation, but he didn't get a chance. Council Member Land asked if there could be a problem with ducting. Steven Miller said Pierce Air Conditioning said they would have to redo duct work and we don't have a cost for that. Council Member Elliston said she doesn't think the kitchen needs a new air conditioner. Mayor Garcia said he has cooked here and never had any issues and asked council to stop by and check it out. Council Members Land and Sutton were in favor. Council Members Elliston, Moreno and Garza were against.

Erin Corbell said she should get an appraisal on lake property this week. Previous council discussed getting a survey and appraisal for the G. Rollie White facility sale. Erin said we are having serious outbreaks of parvo at the animal control center. She has had 17 puppies in the last 2 weeks, and more than half have had to be euthanized due to parvo. Council Member Elliston asked if there are any ideas how to handle the situation. Erin said animal control is writing citations. She gives a warning then writes a citation. Erin asked, do we bring back another full time ACO or a part time ACO. Council Member Elliston said she would be in support of another full time but there would have to be strict guidelines because the second person that was approved in the past was not used as intended. There were supposed to be two vehicles so they could work more, but they only had one vehicle. Council Member Elliston said we have an animal control program and asked if we handled the issue with citizens calling sheriff's office to dispatch help with animal control, but citizens are being told nobody is available. Council Member Moreno said there are other issues we need to address with the county. Council Member Elliston asked if there would be a dent made in the number of strays if we have an additional ACO. Council Member Elliston said if we had another person they could alternate weekends and stagger schedules. Previous council felt like another position could help.

Mayor Garcia said we have several personnel requests to discuss. We wanted to discuss pay scale. Human Resources starts with \$17.17 up to \$23.77 depending on experience. Some people had questions on where the starting step is. Who decides where an employee starts. Lisa McElrath said it's at the subjectivity of the supervisor hiring to determine the level of experience. Lisa said many of the grades have not been adjusted in 8 ½ years. Erin said they might need to be adjusted if we don't get any applicants. Council Member Elliston asked we advertise the pay. Erin said there is a range. Council Member Elliston said if a staff member has been here for 8 – 10 years as an example, the new person with no experience would be brought in at the same salary as the person

who left. Lisa said if you don't adjust the pay scale to meet market, that makes it unreasonable to expect someone to come in at a pay scale that's 8 years old. Erin said we have not added in basic cost of living. Council Member Elliston said our base is grossly underpaid in her opinion. Mayor Garcia said this is 8 years ago step one on several line items. Council Member Moreno said he thinks it needs to be a step not a grade. There's no control over pay raises. Lisa said the grade is putting you into a classification. Fire/EMS Level 1 has different responsibility than maintenance level 1. That's what the grade establish. Erin said they are helpful. A lot of municipalities adopt them because merit-based raises are easily misconstrued as favoritism or something like that. Council Member Elliston said this can be the same way if we decide to start somebody out as a 5. Council Member Moreno said we have this in place, why are we not using it. Erin said she values the supervisor to align that role with what the position should be earning. Council Member Moreno said why have it if we're not using it. Council Member Sutton said in normal times, you're not going to have inflation like that. Lisa said it's a topic that's difficult to manage. Things change constantly. This is a good step because it does help provide for stability. But it has to be reviewed regularly and acknowledge that these numbers can't stay stagnant for years. Council Member Elliston said the golf manager description seems to be off to her. She thought the golf manager was a supervisory position, they manage their budget, prepare their budget, do everything for their department. She was concerned about hiring for that position, but groundskeeper is the job description they were given. Is he a different level of supervisor. Erin said we're splitting into departments and divisions. PPM is a division, departments are under PPM. Council Member Elliston said she feels like people at \$13 an hour is not a living wage. She would like to see maybe \$15 as a starting wage. Council Member Sutton said we have upped it every year. Council Member Elliston said we didn't year before last. Council Member Sutton said we raised a lot of those and doesn't understand how we can afford to raise everything year after year. Mayor Garcia said he doesn't know that all positions should bring in that much. Erin said one of the employees is a high school student so maybe they don't all need to be raised. Council Member Elliston asked if we have a problem filling positions at those lower rates. Erin said no, not typically.

Erin said she is requesting a salary survey for these positions. Council Member Gomez said he is very concerned about the future. He would like to see a training platform. Erin said we have certainly talked about what we can do. We've created some apprentice programs for water and electric programs. Council Member Moreno asked what kind of time would it take for say water and electric. Erin said it could take years. Erin said there is a lineman school is Snyder but it's \$10,000. If we paid that, how long of a commitment would we require of them. Mayor Garcia asked if we're ok with the current step grade and re-visit when need be. Erin said she would task HR with the salary survey and will give her 60-90 days.

Mayor Garcia said there are council members who are not wanting to add positions unless they're essential. We need to dictate what is essential and what's not essential. Erin said the one essential is fire but there is \$69,000 remaining to allocate which is not enough for that position. Lisa said she figured in what council wanted for supplementals leaving \$79,000 excess fund balance. If you approve payroll that becomes an operational expense which you figure in the 90-day fund balance, that leaves \$69,000. Council Member Elliston asked how many positions are in budget but not filled. Erin said 2 water positions, 2 electric positions, and a water treatment position. Council Member Elliston asked if we can use the money we're not spending for those positions. Erin explained that you can't use water funds for general funds. Lisa said she would suggest maybe depleting 2 or 3 days of fund balance. If at the end of the year some positions aren't filled, you could be back at the 90 days. She would think that would be a better way to go. Council Member Sutton asked if we raised the salary, could we attract more people for these open positions. Miller said he didn't know. We have to figure out what we're not doing. Miller said he thinks we should think about establishing a job fair at the civic center or something. Throwing an ad out and posting it isn't helping. He doesn't think throwing money at it is the answer. Council Member Sutton agreed and said when the kids graduate and you ask them what they're going to do, they don't know. Miller said it's hard to find people who want to work. Council Member Gomez agreed.

Mayor Garcia said so we don't have money for a fire/EMS person. Erin said unless chief wants to give up his command truck. Chief Perrin said he would do it. He will give up his truck. Council Member Elliston said she

doesn't know that giving up his truck is the solution because that's a one-time allocation for funds. A new employee is multi years. Council Member Elliston asked if the additional person would help cut down on the overtime. Chief Perrin said yes. Erin said if his truck is financed, that frees up \$87,000. Council Member Elliston said that's for just this year. Council Member Moreno said if we keep pulling from that electric fund, we could have a problem. He believes they are going to deregulate. Lisa said they already have deregulated but municipalities can vote to deregulate. Council Member Moreno said he thinks there will come a time where we won't have a choice. Council Member Moreno asked Lisa if 90-day reserves fund is standard. She said GFOA recommends 60 days. Erin said Lisa is going to add in the extra \$42,000 from the county. They budgeted for \$200,000.

Lisa said she needs to see where council stands on tax rate. The no new revenue tax rate is what was used to figure budget. The voter approval rate would be \$32,000. Our current tax rate is she believes around 35 cents. Council Member Moreno said he is not in favor of raising taxes. Lisa said the proper way to fund payroll, especially in emergency services, is through the tax rate. But we don't raise enough taxes. Council Member Moreno said the reason we do the budget process is to stay within the budget. Lisa said she will bring the tax rate back to council for their approval at a meeting in August. Council Member Land said he was in favor of the voter approval tax rate. Other council members were in favor of the no new tax rate.

Fire department personnel. All were against. Council Member Moreno said he would like to do a freeze on all additional positions. All were in favor of no new positions not already budgeted for.

Lisa reviewed the new position for administrative technician to free up time for purchasing and mechanic. Council Member Elliston said she would like to see the mechanic doing more mechanic work. Erin said there may be someone at the service center that can help. Miller said we should mature more with that person before we proceed with this one. Erin said we have tried it before, but it has not been successful. Miller said with our single mechanic, we have all sizes of equipment. Things are continuously breaking down. The adjustment to help that person would be a great asset to that. He sees the mechanic every day and he is pulled away to do copying, paperwork, receipts.

Increase stand by pay for police. Council Member Elliston said it's not worth her giving up her time for \$10. Mayor Garcia said he thinks if everyone else is making \$30 and police are making \$10, that's not fair. All were in favor.

Miller said he wanted to go back to electric fund supplemental for engineering fees for sale of substations. He can propose a \$30,000 cut on the \$90,000 request. Council supported the \$60,000 consulting fee request.

Mayor Garcia said going back into salaries, council would like to look at a possible salary freeze on some positions and wants to make sure we can afford the 3% increase. Council Member Moreno said he doesn't have a problem with 3%, but does have a problem with 6% when we have the step grade in place. If we're not doing a merit raise, we shouldn't give someone a 6% because they're doing a good job. If we're saying it's not a merit raise, why are we giving someone a 6% raise if they're doing a good job. We have the step and grade in place. Lisa said she has an employee who has been given additional duties and additional people to supervise. She feels like it is beyond merit, it is additional duties. Is there flexibility for that? Even if their duties and responsibilities have been enhanced rather substantially. Mayor Garcia asked if this saves any money in the long run. Lisa asked if there is any leeway of a supervisor to change the pay rate of an employee. Council Member Elliston said she feels like this should be a starting point to use when hiring. She doesn't think moving an employee up should be automatic every year. She thinks the 3% should be a cost of living and should come to council every year. Council can look at the budget and see if they have the money. Lisa said that's why they give you the base. It can be pulled out. Lisa said she doesn't agree. It incentivizes people. Mayor Garcia said he agrees with giving the supervisors the ability

to recognize and reward their employees. The step grade gives us a good idea of what our payroll will look like each year. Council Member Land thinks this request is pretty rare, but this person has really stepped up. Council Member Elliston said that then becomes a merit increase and it should be across the board. Erin said she doesn't feel like she has the authority to give outside of this, so there is not a raise that council hasn't given permission. Council Member Sutton doesn't think we should get into the merit raises. Miller said we have a resource. We will never compete with the private sector so we should push that aside. He would like us to communicate with the employees and try to promote a document that tells them based on this survey, you are properly paid for that position and we have benchmarks. We don't have that. Council Member Elliston asked if this raise is for all supervisors. Erin said no. Council Member Elliston said in that case, she is against it. Lisa said we do have a form that asks why are you recommending this increase. Lisa thinks there should be rules for requests that are beyond the step plan. Erin asked if she is correct in hearing there is not going to be any 6% raises, and all are going to be 3%. Council Member Elliston said that is her feeling. Erin asked if there are any that wouldn't receive the 3%. Mayor Garcia said it's 3% across the board. Council Member Gomez said he feels like salaries keep going up and up but we aren't getting any more income. Lisa said that's not true.

Mayor Garcia asked do we give supervisors leeway to give 3% raises with council approval? Erin said yes. Erin said we need confirmation, do we want to give everyone the 3% increase and decrease those who requested 6% down to 3%. Council Member Sutton said he thinks a pay raise should be earned. Erin commented that Council Member Sutton had also said no merit based raises. Council Member Sutton said he thinks 3% every year is a good pay raise.

Mayor Garcia said he understands where we are financially but doesn't know if we have the justification to freeze pay raises. We have an issue with attracting and keeping employees. He doesn't think a raise freeze is going to help attract people. Council Member Moreno said he doesn't have a problem with 3%. Council Member Elliston said if we approve a 3% across the board and decline those with the 6% requests, how much would that bring back into the budget. Lisa said she will have to find out and bring back. Council Member Sutton said years ago, people were looking for jobs with benefits. Those benefits are still there. A lot of people had to cut benefits or have employees help pay. Benefits are a big plus. Council Member Land asked if there is a deduction in insurance premium. Erin said we offer employees a deductible and offer them the opportunity to buy up to the higher level. Council Member Moreno said he is in favor of 3%. Council Member Sutton was in favor of for 3%. Council Member Gomez was in favor of 3% but not 6%. Council Member Elliston was in favor of 3%. Council Member Land said he thinks the 3% is fair but he's ok with those who want to bring salaries forward for discussion. Council Member Moreno said he would like to give the supervisor's more freedom next year, but is being more conservative this year as they learn. Council Member Elliston said she feels like the additional 3%, it is a merit type thing and she knows all of the supervisors should be given the opportunity to get that bump up. Miller said they have to come up with a good strategy that needs to grow with the City. Council Member Gomez would like to see a little bit more training or a better platform of training. All employees should feel value. Mayor Garcia said he is a huge fan of development, training and home grown development. We need to figure out how to train some Brady people. Council Member Sutton asked if the people whose salary is "open" do they get the 3% as well. Erin said yes.

G. Rollie White

Erin said previous council asked staff for an appraisal to prepare to sell it. It's going to take millions of dollars to fix that facility. Council discussed having to do a charter review to change the lease requirements.

Council Member Elliston said she and Council Member Moreno talked and Council Member Moreno suggested remodeling fire and PD at current PD facility, one facility on this big lot. Erin said we have complete plans for PD at the cafeteria. We don't have complete plans for FD. Council Member Land said we discussed that at the beginning. We did discuss putting them together either here or maybe the old Super S. We didn't like the Super S location. Council Member Land said he thinks we're pretty far along. We're at about \$200,000 ahead. Council

Member Moreno said if we save \$1million, then we're still ahead. Council Member Land said we discussed several options and came up with moving PD to the old cafeteria and moving FD to PD.

Fee schedule –

All were in favor of increasing additional poly cart and credit card fees.

Council Member Elliston said feels like the Civic Center fees are too high. Regular people can't afford to rent it. It should be affordable for our citizens to use. Council Member Elliston would like to discuss further.

Council Member Moreno said he thinks we should charge interest on the Dodge Heights lots. Council Member Elliston said we did not do it for Davee. Council Member Moreno said we can't keep going back to mistakes that were made prior. Council Member Elliston said it would be a burden to those citizens. Council Member Moreno said it could encourage them to go to a finance company. Mayor Garcia asked what the current interest rate is. Erin said 7% which is what Council Member Gomez had told her. Council Member Elliston said she couldn't charge them that interest rate. She thinks we should give them 5 year leases and let them finance. Mayor Garcia said we have to think about what's best for the City and for the citizens as well. Council Member Elliston agreed.

Brady Lake – Cabins – all were in favor to increase to \$500

Davee – ok to remove lease fees

Pool passes – ok

Civic center – rental - \$400 per day. Council Member Elliston said she would like to talk about changing. She is also not ok with charging \$250 for cleaning. She doesn't think people should clean and then have to pay the cleaning fee also. Lisa said we're still going to have to bring in someone to clean. All agreed on \$150 cleaning fee. Council Member Elliston said she would like to see how much it is booked.

Golf course – there has been issues with youth tearing up greens and not listening because it's so cheap. Council Member Moreno thinks we can change student rate to 18 and under. Mayor Garcia said 18 and under should be one rate and another rate for adult. Erin said easiest would be to roll them up to the adult fee. Senior rate remains at \$10. Cart shed rental –

Building permits – scratch 0 – 800 square feet.

Security Fee for police - \$50 security fee – ok

Animal Services – impound fee – increase to \$75 / \$150 / \$200

Poly Cart – add'l poly cart - \$10 - ok

Tarp fee - \$10 – ok

Credit card fee – ok

Utilities – ok

Tap fees – Erin reviewed our tap fees with council members after Councilman Sutton had brought forward a complaint from a citizen about how high our tap fees are. Erin completed a comparison study with fees from Mason, Llano, San Saba, Brownwood, Early, Fredericksburg and San Angelo. Our fees are competitive, if not significantly lower, than those in our region and Erin does not see the need to reduce them at this time. Council Member Elliston mentioned that we may need to look into raising those fees, if we are significantly lower.

Lisa said she will take all of the numbers and update.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Garcia recessed the meeting at 5:08 until 5:00 tomorrow to review final changes



Aaron Garcia, Mayor

Attest: 

Tina Keys, City Secretary