

September 12, 2016

On this the 12th day of September 5:00 p.m., the City Commission of the City of Hereford, Texas, convened in a special session in the Commission Chamber, in the City Hall, the meeting being open to the public and notice of said meeting having been given as prescribed by Chapter 551 of the Government Code, with the following members being present and in attendance, to-wit:

Tom Simons, Mayor
Jose A. Garza, Commissioner Place One
Charlie Kerr, Commissioner Place Three
Linda Cumpston, Commissioner, Place Four
Cathy Bunch, Commissioner Place Five
Marcos Castro, Commissioner Place Six
Rick L. Hanna, City Manager
Suzanne Finch, City Secretary
Audie Sciumbato, City Attorney

Absent: Angie Alonzo, Commissioner Place Two

John Carson from the Hereford Brand was in attendance to witness the proceedings. Also in attendance was Officer Ramey Rice, Officer Jody Miller, Steve Horrell, June Rudd, and Rebecca Dockery.

Mayor Simons voiced the invocation and then called upon Commissioner Kerr to lead the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag. He called the meeting to order, welcomed those in attendance, and introduced each item on the agenda.

PUBLIC HEARING:

ITEM 1 – Hear public comments regarding the proposed tax rate for 2016.

Mayor Simons opened the public hearing regarding the proposed tax rate for 2016 for comments at 5:04 p.m.

Mr. Horrell spoke first; noting he understood from reading the local newspaper, no one attended the first public hearing; he stated he hates when people don't show up when they need to show up. He stated as a property owner if the water, sewer, and trash rates go up then he must pass that cost on to his renter. Mr. Horrell noted he wanted to see the process as it is one of our rights and freedoms and it should not be taken for granted.

Mrs. Rudd requested the Commission be cognizant of the seniors in our community that are on a fixed income. She stated she lives in the county but maintains a house in town and some day may have to move back permanently and for that reason she is interested in the property tax rates.

Mayor Simons noted there is a homestead exemption available for persons over the age of 65.

Mr. Horrell inquired as to whether the tax increase was in response to the cost of trash removal going up and the water rates increased due to infrastructure needs.

City Manager Hanna noted that is partially correct; he would like to see the tax increase as he is building a “war chest” to purchase water for the future of our city. He stated people can complain; but, the truth is our water rates and tax rate are some of the cheapest in the state.

Mr. Horrell agreed water is the life of a city. He stated for property owners \$25 is not a big deal; however, it is a lot of money for some renters.

Mayor Simons stated the increase in trash is due to the fact the service provider to some extent can negotiate an increase and that cost is passed along to the consumer.

Mrs. Rudd inquired how the money would be kept for water and not spent on other things.

City Manager Hanna clarified the “war chest” would come from the enterprise funds; the small tax increase would cover items in the general fund. He stated our taxes are roughly half what some of the other cities charge and we need some sort of revenue other than enterprise funds in case our water sales are down. City Manager Hanna stated he is currently looking at two properties for water acquisition and plans to buy water before he retires.

The public hearing concluded at 5:15 p.m.

REGULAR HEARINGS:

ITEM 2 – Set date, time, and place of meeting to consider adoption of the proposed tax rate for 2016.

City Manager Hanna stated the next regular meeting of the City Commission is set for September 19th at 6:30 p.m. with the work session at 5:45 p.m. as usual.

Commissioner Cumpston made the motion to set the date of September 19th, 2016 for adoption of the proposed tax rate. Commissioner Garza seconded the motion and it passed with the unanimous vote of the Commission.

ITEM 3 – Announcements and comments from Mayor and City Commissioners.

Commissioner Bunch stated she has been on the Commission since around 2006 or 2007 and during those years City Manager Hanna has made sure the money goes where it needs to go and she commended him for his integrity and a job well done.

ITEM 4 – Announcements and comments from City Staff.

City Manager Hanna thanked the audience for their questions. He noted he would like to be able to purchase water at fair market value but that is not going to happen. He opposed eminent domain in this situation and stated it was his intention to use unencumbered funds within the next two to three years to put together a water deal to bring before the Commission for their consideration.

ITEM 5 – Public Comments.

Mrs. Rudd suggested the water acquisition be decided by RFP (request for proposals) as the competitive bid process would bring in better prices and it would improve the public's perception as anyone interested in putting in a bid would be given an opportunity to participate.

City Manager Hanna noted the City knows where good quality water is located through testing. He stated the water acquisition RFP process does not work well in this situation for two reasons (1) it is difficult to put together a standard set of specifications and (2) most landowners do not want the expense of drilling test wells to prove their water meets the requirements as stated in a bid.

Commissioner Bunch noted we did that when we were looking at doing a bond for water; we asked farmers to submit bids; people did not want to pay for test wells.

Mrs. Rudd wanted more notice for the meetings, stating seeing the agenda on the "yellow sheet" the day of the meeting was not sufficient. City Manager Hanna asked if she had visited the City's website. Mrs. Rudd replied she had not but would look for it.

Mayor Simons reiterated the decision would ultimately fall on the City Commission and elections are held every year.

Mrs. Rudd thanked the Commission for their service; she noted they probably do not get a fair return for the time they invest.

Mayor Simons thanked Mrs. Rudd for her attendance and encouragement. He reminded the Commission they would meet again next week, September 19th at 6:30 p.m.

There being no further business before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 5:28 p.m.