

CITY OF GLADEWATER
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL SESSION
MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 9, 2015
6:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Harold R. Wells, Mayor Pro-tem J.D. Shipp, Lana Niemann, Elijah Anderson, Chris Bland, Leon Watson

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dennis Robertson

STAFF PRESENT: Melba Haralson, Rob Vine, Mark Dennison, Judy Hagle, Michael Kirkwood, Casey Chambers

GUESTS PRESENT: Charlie Smith, Keith Bonds, David Willard, Mark Carpenter, Christian Allen, Jim Bardwell

I. CALL TO ORDER – Mayor Wells called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. BUDGET WORKSHOP for fiscal year 2016

Interim City Manager Melba Haralson said after 3 budget workshops and a public hearing we had a balanced budget ready to adopt on September 17th however, after a meeting with the City of Longview last week we are faced with a potential \$60k deficit due to their new animal shelter.

David Willard, Longview City Manager explained that the City of Longview has been contracting with the Humane Society of Northeast Texas just as Gladewater and several other cities in the region. The last 3 years has been rough for the Humane Society due to euthanasia rate, funding, etc. As a result the City of Longview, jointly with Gregg County decided to build a new \$5.7 million shelter with 2,700 square feet and the ability to house 11,000 animals for an average stay of 5 days. The City of Longview and Gregg County put up \$2.5 million each with the remainder coming from private donations. They estimate to open between April and July of 2016, at which time the Humane Society shelter will close. He said they have already hired a director who will start in mid-October. Mr. Willard said Gladewater's contract cost of \$82,833 for the initial 6-months does not include capital costs or their animal control officers.

Mayor Pro-tem Shipp questioned why the initial 6 months is \$82,833 compared to \$86,272 for fiscal year 17. Mr. Willard stated that was for start-up costs.

Keith Bonds, Longview Assistant City Manager gave further explanation regarding the goal of being a "no-kill" shelter and the average stay of 5 days. He also said there are a lot of consumables involved in start-up costs.

Interim City Manager Melba Haralson questioned how they arrived at the Gladewater intake number of 492 animals and stated residents of Warren City, Clarksville City, Union Grove, Sabine and other incorporated areas have a Gladewater mailing address. Mr. Willard said that number was provided by the Human Society.

Mr. Willard and Mr. Bonds fielded several other questions posed by the Council. Mayor Pro-tem Shipp stated this is a corvette facility and adding \$40-\$60k to our budget is a serious undertaking. He said our options are to either find another shelter, raise taxes, or provide animal control services until our budgeted \$44k is depleted, then drop the program. He said if we eliminate the animal control program we will have a budget surplus that could be used to close the jail and hire another police officer or enhance the retirement program, or repair streets.

Councilmember Niemann asked them to consider a reduction in the 6 month start-up cost. Mayor Pro-tem Shipp said he would be in favor of a 3-year contract starting at \$44k, with an increase to about \$47k the second year and \$50k the third year. He said our participation has to be at a rate we can afford and if we don't participate Longview will have to get the \$80k somewhere else.

Keith Bonds stated the shelter may not be ready to open in April and the fiscal 17 contract amount is a complete guess. He stated they have some monetary pledges that are not yet reflected.

David Willard said they were instructed by their Council to contract with other entities at a per animal cost. He said they will entertain any offer we present. He also said that Gladewater can do fund raising to apply to the city's contract cost.

Mayor Pro-tem Shipp said he is not in favor of raising taxes and once again he stated the other options are to; eliminate animal control services, use the \$44k we have budgeted until it is depleted, or propose a contract to Longview with a given rate that we can afford.

Mayor Pro-tem Shipp recommended that we maintain the proposed budget in its current state and recognized that we may have to amend in April - July. He also stated he has a problem with the start-up costs. David Willard said they will go back and look at that again.

Mayor Wells asked if there were any other comments or concerns regarding the budget.

Councilmember Bland questioned how much the reduction was to the library budget. Interim City Manager answered about \$10k but affirmed the salary of the part-time position eliminated was about \$12k. She said the operating hours of the library will be adjusted so that there are two employees working while the library is open to the public.

With regard to Longview Animal Shelter, Councilmember Bland questioned the accuracy of their 6-month calculation, believing it should be \$34,725. Interim City Manager Haralson explained there is a discrepancy between our intake numbers and the ones Longview is using. Mayor Pro-tem Shipp added that the remaining difference is the start-up costs.

Gladewater Animal Control Officer Mark Dennison explained statistics he compiled and answered several questions regarding Gladewater intake and demographics.

By consensus it was agreed to offer Longview a 3-year contract starting at \$44k with an incremental increase up to \$50k for the third year. The proposed contract (if available) will be considered at the regular City Council meeting on 9/17.

III. ADJOURN

Mayor Pro-tem Shipp moved to adjourn at 7:13 p.m., seconded by Councilmember Anderson. Adjourned by consensus.

HAROLD R. WELLS, MAYOR

ATTEST:

MELBA HARALSON, CITY SECRETARY
INTERIM CITY MANAGER