

CITY OF GLADEWATER
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL SESSION
MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 1, 2016
6:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Harold Wells, Mayor Pro-tem J.D. Shipp, Lana Niemann,
Dennis Robertson, Chris Bland

MEMBERS ABSENT: Elijah Anderson, Leon Watson

STAFF PRESENT: Theo Melancon, Rhonda Smith, Judy Hagle, Susan Thomas, Kathy
Cannon

GUESTS PRESENT: Jim Bardwell, Suzanne Bardwell, Liz Vaughn, Kerry Mackey, Jimmy
Williams, Phillip Creel, Randy Koss, Don Greenwood, Jan Greenwood,
Jack Earp, Mark May, David Sturkie, John Paul Tallent, Mary Ann
Cumbie

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Wells called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. PUBLIC HEARING on budget for fiscal year 2017

Mayor Wells opened the public hearing at 6:00 p.m.

Liz Vaughn, with McCreary, Veselka, Bragg & Allen law firm gave a presentation on delinquent property tax collections. Total delinquent taxes for 2014 and prior tax years is \$206,472 as of 7/31/16. There are 34 accounts currently posted for sale.

City Manager Theo Melancon gave a presentation on the budget and cited several services the City has absorbed in recent years without raising taxes, i.e. library for \$800,000 since 2007, ambulance service \$505,000 since 2013, ballpark \$140,000 debt service. He cited specific operational and infrastructure needs and rising costs of service. He then made a comparison of our current tax rate that yields approximately \$12,000,000 in taxes to the 1956 tax rate of \$0.78 which is equivalent to \$22,357,000.

John Paul Tallent asked what GEDCO's contribution is to the City. Mr. Melancon responded they are putting in \$195,000 but it is designated to specific projects.

Councilmember Niemann affirmed to Jan Greenwood that GEDCO has enough reserve funds for the future. Mrs. Greenwood then asked about the sales tax rate. City Manager Melancon stated we cannot increase that rate.

David Sturkie asked how many businesses GEDCO has brought in. City Manager Melancon suggested he attend GEDCO meetings.

John Paul Tallent requested the City Manager to look at Longview and Spring Hill ball park complex for the price of \$2.3 million, which included wind screens.

With other questions regarding ball park construction, Councilmember Niemann invited the public to attend ball park meetings.

Don Greenwood said the ball park as a whole was bad judgement. Mary Ann Cumbie added it was a glorified act of the Council and priorities are wrong. Mayor Pro-tem Shipp spoke about the importance of providing quality of life projects.

Randy Koss said antiques are out. People want art and entertainment. GEDCO should be changed to a 4B.

Councilmember Robertson said we have to work together to be successful. He expressed concern over the crumbling infrastructure. He said some cities have more money than we do and we need to see a plan of action. The rate we are working now is inadequate.

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Councilmember Bland said he does not want to cut raises or employment. He said if Theo was here 5 years ago we probably would not be in this situation.

Suzanne Bardwell said the school bond was a huge quality of life boost to the City. The library is also a huge blessing and she complimented staff.

Mayor Wells said the ambulance came and went. The new school is great but only about 600 people came out to vote and many were against it. He said the ballpark is here and we might as well like it. He said we don't have to always agree but let's work together and leave as friends. Councilmember Niemann echoed those sentiments.

Mayor Pro-tem Shipp thanked City Manager Melancon for a great job of presenting the budget and thanked everyone for their comments and concerns.

Jack Earp said he remembers 1956 where Gladewater had 4 grocery stores, 1 bank and 2 schools. And now everyone goes to Longview 2-3 times per week. He said he doesn't have a problem with the 9 cent increase. Gay Avenue is the ugliest street in town and needs to be cleaned up. He said Gladewater needs a young John Paul Tallent who will build starter homes. He added that Gladewater is very lucky to have a part of the Sabine River.

John Paul Tallent thanked Theo Melancon for a job well done on the budget and for taking the time to sit down and go over it with him.

Don Greenwood asked if the 9 cents had to be all in one year. Councilmember Bland replied that it does. Mr. Greenwood then asked if the Council could commit to no reckless spending. Councilmember Bland said there is nothing fancy in the proposed budget.

Theo Melancon then recapped upcoming water and sewer needs, specifically upgrades to the sewer plant built in 1981. He said our water treatment is great but some of our water lines are from the 1930's. Monthly water and sewer rate increase of \$7.25 will be necessary to pay for those improvements.

Jimmy Williams told the Council to continue to do the job you are doing.

With no other public comments, the public hearing was closed at 8:25 p.m.

III. PUBLIC HEARING on proposed tax rate for fiscal year 2017

See intermingled comments above.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENT that final vote for fiscal year 2016-2017 budget and tax rate will be taken at the regular City Council meeting September 15, 2016

Mayor Wells made the announcement.

V. ADJOURN

Councilmember Robertson moved to adjourn at 8:26 p.m., seconded by Councilmember Bland. Adjourned by consensus.

HAROLD R. WELLS, MAYOR

ATTEST:

MELBA HARALSON, CITY SECRETARY