

DRAFT
MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GALVESTON
WORKSHOP - FEBRUARY 27, 2025

2/27/2025 - Minutes

1. DECLARATION OF A QUORUM AND CALL MEETING TO ORDER

With a quorum present, the workshop was called to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Craig Brown, Mayor Pro Tem Marie Robb, Council Member Sharon Lewis, Council Member David Finklea, Council Member Bob Brown, Council Member Alex Porretto, and Council Member Beau Rawlins.

3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- 3.A. Clarification Of Consent And Regular City Council Agenda Items - This Is An Opportunity For City Council To Ask Questions Of Staff On Consent And Regular Agenda Items (1 Hour)

Items 8B, 11A, 11C, 11D, 11G, 11H, 11I, 11J, 11O, 11S, 11U, 11V, 11W, and 12A were clarified by Staff.

- 3.B. Discussion Of Coyotes/Wildlife And Related Proposed Programs (J Henderson/ Animal Control - 15min)

Galveston Island Humane Society Director Josh Henderson and Animal Services Supervisor Kristen Thompson discussed with City Council the growing issue of coyotes on Galveston Island, which is causing concern among residents and local authorities. The coyotes are genetically unique, sparking scientific interest, but they are increasingly encroaching on residential areas, causing fear for some and admiration for others.

To address the issue, the City introduced a GIS-based reporting tool for the public to track coyote sightings and behavior. Public education on hazing techniques—such as yelling, throwing objects, or using water guns—is also emphasized to discourage coyotes from approaching human areas. Key points discussed include: (1) Skirting around homes, unsecured garbage, and neglected barbecues attracting wildlife; (2) Public education on reporting coyote sightings, as only 15% of incidents are reported; (3) Volunteer programs and social media outreach to increase citizen involvement in hazing and wildlife education; (4) Plans to hire more animal control officers and discuss budget needs for better response and enforcement; and (5) The possibility of creating a wildlife ordinance to better manage the situation. In conclusion, a multi-pronged approach, combining education, community involvement, improved animal control, and policy development, is being pursued to address the coyote problem and other wildlife-related concerns on the island.

Council took a 10 minute break at 11:10 a.m.

- 3.C. Pelican Island Bridge Update (D Buckley/C Brown/M Robb - 15 Min)

Deputy City Manager Dan Buckley provided an update on the Pelican Island Bridge. Key points include: (1) The City and TXDot have agreed on an instrument that is ready for signing once certain conditions are met; (2) There is a need for additional funding to complete the bridge project. CM Robb is pursuing backup funding from the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC); (3) There is a local funding requirement for the project, and a memorandum from the City Attorney explains why this is necessary; (4) Galveston County initially committed \$7

million, but only \$5 million will be available after adjustments for other projects; (5) The City is exploring the possibility of using part of the County's bond issue to cover the \$2 million shortfall, though this decision would need Council approval; (6) for the Project: The project has significant support from local, regional, and national stakeholders, including legislators and economic development groups; (7) CM Robb will be presenting the project to the Transportation Policy Committee (TPC), and while no vote will take place immediately, it is a critical step for gaining further support. The funding request is substantial (around \$139 million), and while it's a significant ask, there is broad backing for the project from various groups. The next steps include continued outreach for funding and support.

- 3.D. Discussion Of The City Of Galveston Comprehensive Plan Update – Plan Framework And Timeline (T. Tietjens/ P. Milburn - 10 Min)

Development Services Director Tim Tietjens and Senior Planner Pete Milburn discussed with Council updates related to the City of Galveston's comprehensive plan, including the timeline, scope, and public engagement process. The project is pending an award from the GLO Resilient Communities Program. The estimated contract award is expected in three to four months, leading to a likely project kick-off in July 2025. The scope will be discussed in more detail at the next meeting, with the potential for adjustments if necessary. The consultant has agreed to hold their price for up to a year. A steering committee will be appointed by Council at the next meeting. The plan includes multiple public engagement points, including town halls and steering committee meetings. The project is set for completion within 24 months, with 12 months dedicated to the comprehensive plan and 12 months for implementing resilience measures and ordinances. There was a brief discussion on the legal and financial aspects of modifying the scope, with a 25% rule for changes to contract value.

Council took a lunch break starting at 12:26 p.m. and ending at 12:50 p.m.

- 3.E. Discuss A Draft Request For Proposal For A Master Developer For Stewart Beach Park. This Draft Is For A Definition Of Master Planner And A Scope Of Services/Work The City Is Requesting (D Anderson - 20 Min)

Architectural Project Manager Dudley Anderson discussed with Council a draft Request for Proposals (RFP) for a master developer for Stewart Beach Park, Key points discussed include: (1) Defining the Scope: The city needs to clearly define the park's development goals to guide the RFP and ensure consistent, comparable proposals. This involves setting clear expectations and identifying desired project outcomes; (2) Developer Selection: The process will include evaluating proposals based on qualifications, costs, and a master plan. The city aims to balance local participation and ensure a fair, transparent selection process, possibly using a design-build approach; (3) Public Participation: Incorporating public input is critical, but the process should be clearly defined to avoid ambiguity, which could impact profitability and success; (4) Master Plan: The master plan should reference existing plans, define key elements (like land use), and outline developer responsibilities. There will be some flexibility to allow for developer input while maintaining a defined scope; (5) Beach Patrol and Operations: Considerations for the Beach Patrol, including space needs and minimizing its direct beach operations, are important. There's also a need for financial projections and a finalized business plan for the project; (6) East Beach: While no new development is planned, some operations may shift to East Beach, which should be considered in the developer's plan; (7) Timeline and Next Steps: Feedback is expected within two weeks to refine the RFP, with the goal of having a clearer proposal ready for the March meeting.

- 3.F. Discussion Of Parks Owned And Or Managed By The City (C Brown/B Brown/City Staff - 40 Min)

1. Future Status of Community, Revenue Producing and Tourist Oriented Parks (D Buckley)

Deputy City Manager Dan Buckley discussed with Council the future management and status of parks owned or managed by the City, with an emphasis on community revenue-generating

and tourist-oriented parks. Key topics include: (1) Park Categories: The parks are divided into four types: Community Parks, Beach Parks, Sports Parks, and Revenue/Enterprise Parks. The goal is to refine the structure of these parks for better management and efficiency; (2) Operational Challenges: Currently, the City parks have a bifurcated management system where some are run internally by the City and others by the Park Board. There are concerns about operational inefficiencies, financial constraints, and a lack of focus on the core mission of the Park Board, which is to promote tourism.

Staff seeks Council support to: (1) Define and categorize parks more clearly; (2) Shift the management of certain parks (like Seawolf and Dellanera) back to the City; (3) Update the mission statement of the City Parks and Recreation Department to better reflect its role; and (4) Determine the appropriateness of using city resources for revenue-generating activities that may compete with local businesses (e.g., boat ramps or convenience stores in parks).

Concerns are raised about whether the delegation of park management to the Park Board complies with the City's charter, the legality of using city funds to compete with local businesses, and whether parks should be used for private business ventures. Staff requests that Council provide input on how to proceed with these issues, and a comprehensive review is needed, particularly on the financial and legal implications of changes. The overall goal is to streamline park management, improve operational efficiency, and ensure that city resources are used appropriately.

2. Seawolf Park - Including but not Limited to a Business Plan, RV Park, Sewer Treatment, Boat Ramp and Naval Museum

Deputy City Manager Dan Buckley discussed with Council the management and future development of Seawall Park, particularly considering the addition of amenities like a boat ramp, RV park, and sewer treatment, as well as its potential for generating revenue for the city. Several key points were raised: (1) Seawall Park Development Plans: There have been discussions about adding a boat ramp and an RV park, though these ideas face challenges. One issue is the lack of space for both a boat ramp and an RV park, as well as concerns about the potential cost, legal implications, and competition with local businesses; (2) Revenue and Funding: The City has been considering how to make the park self-sufficient or even generate surplus revenue. However, there's debate about whether it is appropriate for the City to use taxpayer money to compete with local businesses; (3) Legal Questions: There were concerns raised about the legalities of converting a public park for commercial purposes. The Council discussed the need for legal clarification, particularly about whether it's permissible under the city charter and state laws; (4) Park Management: The Council is considering how the City should manage its parks. They're looking at whether the city should take over park management from the Park Board, which currently handles some of the parks, or whether to lease the parks out to private businesses. There was a suggestion that it might be more cost-effective for the City to manage the parks directly, as there would be fewer administrative costs; (5) Next Steps: The City Council discussed putting Seawall Park discussions on hold temporarily while further legal and policy analyses are conducted. There's a need to compare different management models, and a more detailed cost analysis of City-managed parks will be provided at future meetings.

3.G. Discussion Of The Findings Of The Park Board Conflict Of Interest Audit And Expansion Of The City Auditor's Audit Plan For 2025 (G Bulgherini - 20 Min)

City Auditor Glenn Bulgherini provided information on the ongoing conflict of interest audit for the Park Board and the proposed expansion of the City Auditor's 2025 audit plan. He reported that the Conflict of Interest Audit is still in progress, awaiting more information from the Park Board. An update and written report are expected by March. There's a proposal to expand the audit's scope, requiring additional resources and potentially delaying other audits. Council members questioned how this would impact the overall audit plan. The City Auditor suggested expanding the conflict of interest audit, which would require more detailed interviews and verification. This will impact the timeline and resources, possibly delaying

other audits. Discussion was held regarding whether to focus on one or two years of HOT (Hotel Occupancy Tax) fund audits or a broader span. Expanding this audit could affect the resources available for other audits. Due to limited resources, some audits, such as those related to public works overtime, police seized funds, and travel expenses, might be delayed or adjusted. HOT tax audits, especially for short-term rentals and hotels, are taking longer than expected. The Council is considering whether to reduce or postpone these audits. Sales tax audits are prioritized as they directly benefit the general fund, whereas HOT tax audits are seen as more costly and less efficient. There is discussion of expanding conflict of interest audits, especially concerning high-cost projects, to improve oversight and better manage taxpayer money. To meet audit deadlines, there's a suggestion to hire part-time help for data entry, particularly due to staff injuries. The discussion highlights the balance between the cost of audits and the need for proper oversight to ensure transparency and effective use of public funds.

3.H. Discussion Of Joint Meeting Dates For The Wharves And Park Boards (C Brown - 10 Min) (Action)

Mayor Brown placed this item on the agenda to discuss joint meetings with the Wharves and Park Boards, separate from regular workshop meetings. This item is on today's regular meeting agenda for Council's consideration.

3.I. City Topics (Robb/Rawlins - 20 Min)

1. Possible bond for mill and overlay of all streets without raising prices or taxes - The discussion centers around the idea of issuing a bond for street improvements in the City, specifically for milling and overlaying streets, without increasing taxes. The City has been facing challenges with its street paving schedule due to resource allocation for storm recovery efforts and a hiring freeze. The bond would help the City catch up on street projects and use resources efficiently. The funding for the bond could come from the infrastructure set-aside fund, which is currently underutilized.

2. Discussion of incentives for people building large economic development projects, including, but not limited to, drainage; Discussion of NFIP requirements for drainage - Discussion was held regarding the challenges and opportunities associated with drainage requirements in economic development, specifically how they impact developers on the island. There is concern that the City isn't offering enough economic development incentives to attract businesses, with drainage requirements being a significant issue. There's concern about the impact of federal changes on flood insurance policies and local regulations. The Council discussed how to balance the need for effective drainage with fostering economic growth, possibly by introducing new development incentives or adjusting regulations to make projects more feasible. The discussion is focused on finding a balance between maintaining flood safety through drainage requirements while making the city more attractive for developers by offering more flexibility and incentives.

3. Discussion of citizen complaints concerning the City Marshal Program - CM Robb placed this item on the agenda to discuss citizen complaints related to the City Marshall Program. The discussion was about improving the City Marshall Program's operations, ensuring fair enforcement of city codes, handling complaints more transparently, and addressing concerns about how complaints are reported and managed.

4. Update of the Drainage Improvement Pilot Project - Assistant City Manager Brandon Cook reported that the drainage improvement projects are currently stalled due to recovery efforts from recent storms and staffing shortages, but progress is expected once recovery efforts are complete and the necessary personnel are in place.

3.J. City Topics (Rawlins/Porretto - 10 Min)

1. Discussion of workday system and updates - **CM Rawlins placed this item on the agenda to discuss issues with the implementation of the new payroll system (Workday) in the city, particularly within the Police Department. The City's payroll system had technical problems, particularly with the coding for overtime, special assignments, and different types of pay. Council members and City officials emphasized that ensuring employees were paid correctly was a top priority. Although there were issues during the initial rollout, employees' paychecks were issued on time, and the system's glitches were being addressed quickly.**

Discussion of Process of Creation of the Council Agenda - **Discussion was held regarding the process of creation of the Council agenda. Council members, when proposing agenda items, typically have their requests honored as submitted, unless there are items that needed more specifics for clarity. Staff emphasized the importance of council members specifying what they need when submitting agenda items to ensure proper preparation and clarity. If the agenda items are vague, it creates challenges for staff in terms of public understanding and staff preparation.**

3.K. City Topics (Porretto/Rawlins - 10 Min)

Discussion of NFIP requirements for development - **CM Porretto placed this item on the agenda to discuss with Council NFIP requirements for development. The City is working with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to maintain a favorable Community Rating System (CRS), which helps lower flood insurance costs. However, discussions highlight how certain drainage requirements may not contribute to improving the CRS rating and may need to be reassessed to make development easier and more attractive. This item was discussed in conjunction with Workshop Item 3.I.2.**

3.L. Discussion Of Conditions To Be Met Before The City May Accept Any Conveyance Of Any GISD Owned Property (Porretto/C. Brown/B. Maxwell/D. Glywasky - 20 Min)

The discussion focuses on the conditions for the potential transfer of GISD-owned property to the City of Galveston for park development. Key points include: Before the City accepts the land, the building and structures must be demolished, and environmental issues, such as asbestos, must be addressed. The City would like full flexibility to use the land for parks without restrictions, in line with its Master Parks Plan. There is a formal procedure for naming parks, which should not be based on financial contributions, and the City must follow legal steps, including board reviews, before accepting the property. The City opposes the reverter clause proposed by Project Rosenberg, believing it unnecessary due to existing parkland use provisions. Concerns were raised about potential costs beyond acquisition, such as property taxes, environmental cleanup, and long-term maintenance. The City wants to ensure that existing parks (like Jones and Shield Parks) are adequately funded before proceeding with new park development. The City emphasizes the need for clear financial guarantees from Project Rosenberg and an escrow deposit to ensure the deal is genuine. The deadline for escrow and demolition is set for July 1. There is a suggestion for an interlocal agreement to resolve issues like the reverter clause and ensure shared responsibility for the property.

Concerns about community input and transparency are raised, particularly regarding the East End's advocates for the project. In summary, while there is support for acquiring new parkland, the City is cautious and focused on ensuring clear financial commitments, legal processes, and avoiding any hidden costs.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The workshop was adjourned at 3:52 p.m.

Janelle Williams, City Secretary

Date Approved: