

**MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT 6:30 P.M., JULY 21, 2008,
ADMINISTRATION CONFERENCE ROOM, MUNICIPAL CENTER, 1515 N.
GALLOWAY.**

Present: Mayor John Monaco, Councilmembers Al Forsythe, Greg Noschese, Stan Pickett, Shirley Roberts and Dennis Tarpley; City Manager Ted Barron, Deputy City Manager Carol Zolnerowich, Assistant City Manager Mark Hindman, Budget Director Ted Chinn, Finance Director Don Simons, Director of Human Resources George Mones, Director of Information Technology Zak LaJoie, Interim Director of Library Services Jeannie Johnson, Manager of Branch Library Services Jane Brown, Library Services Supervisor Nancy Watson, Manager of Park Services John Frame, Manager of Recreation Oscar Martinez, Manager of Park Planning Lauren Miller, Communications Manager Greg Sowell and Assistant to the City Manager Valerie Bradley.

CALL TO ORDER – 6:40 P.M.

Mayor John Monaco called the meeting to order.

WORK SESSION – ADMINISTRATION CONFERENCE ROOM – 6:40 P.M.

1. **BUDGET REVIEW**

Ted Barron, City Manager, stated that total expenditures for the fiscal year 2008-09 baseline budget are down 3.4 percent from the amended budget and include the addition of six new employees for operations and maintenance at the new police building, but do not include funding for 31 vacant positions or any salary increases for all employee classifications. Mr. Barron said the proposed budget was difficult to prepare and some tough choices had to be made, but stressed that the budget continues to focus on Project Renewal and addressing City Council goals. Mr. Barron said that he would provide more detail on the budget at the budget retreat later in the week.

2. **PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT**

Mark Hindman, Assistant City Manager and Acting Director of Parks and Recreation, presented an overview of the Parks and Recreation Department organization, park facilities and recreation programs and current program activity levels. Mr. Hindman provided a summary of the department's budget by division, net of revenues and compared expenditure increases by expenditure category. Mr. Hindman pointed out that the department is expected to bring in a total of \$1,247,050 in revenues, and with \$7,224,590 in total expenditures, the net cost of departmental operations is \$5,977,540, which he stated does not include \$2,137,106 in reimbursements from the 4B Quality of Life Fund.

Mr. Hindman listed Recreation Division service reductions that were made above and beyond the normal budget trimming process, which included eliminating

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funding for the Recreation District Supervisor vacancy and summer track program, reducing staff time devoted to special events, athletic supplies, and tennis/basketball court lighting, the voluntary reclassification of a secretarial position from full-time to part-time, and the deferral of exercise equipment replacements, all totaling \$221,360. He also noted \$72,586 in service reductions for the Parks Division, which includes eliminating funding for seasonal maintenance workers, one-third reduction in maintenance overtime, and reduced tree maintenance and park irrigation.

Mr. Hindman concluded his presentation with a recap of proposed user fee increases for recreational programs:

Recreation After School Program - \$95 to \$100 per month

Resident Athletic User Fees - \$5 to \$10 per sport

Non-Resident Athletic User Fees - \$15 to \$25 per sport

Participation Cards - \$5 to \$10 annual fee

Mayor Monaco asked how the City's recreation fees compared with other cities in the area. Oscar Martinez, Manager of Recreation, replied that the City's fees are slightly higher compared with the survey cities and that he could provide the survey data to the Council after the meeting. Councilmember Stan Pickett asked if the swimming pool at Evans Recreation Center was approved for replacement and Mr. Hindman responded that the Evans pool renovation is included in the 4B Fund five-year plan, but the scope calls for a spray-ground rather than a pool replacement and added that a spray-ground is less costly to maintain, but that no definite decision has been made as to the final scope of the project.

Councilmember Pickett asked how much money was budgeted for mowing highway rights-of-way. John Frame, Manager of Parks, replied that \$525,000 was budgeted in the 4B Fund. Councilmember Pickett then asked how often the highway corridors are mowed. Mr. Frame said that since TxDOT no longer maintains highway rights-of-way, mowing is done entirely by the City now and that most areas are mowed every other week, but some high profile interchanges, like Military Parkway and LBJ, are mowed weekly. Councilmember Pickett said that the City's image and Project Renewal efforts are important and should be continued. Councilmember Dennis Tarpley asked if TxDOT gives the City credit for taking over all mowing of highway rights-of-way, either on lighting or construction projects, and Mr. Hindman responded no.

Councilmember Tarpley mentioned that he thought there were plans to cover or enclose Town East Pool so that local swim teams could practice during winter months. Mr. Hindman said that staff is still reviewing the concept and developing a cost estimate, but added that the idea is being driven by the school district and not necessarily the local swim clubs. Mr. Martinez said that there are over 350 swim teams in Mesquite, among the largest number in the state, but that they practice primarily in the summer months. Mr. Martinez reiterated that the input staff has received to enclose Town East Pool has come from the school swim programs and not the community swim teams. Mayor Monaco recalled that staff was also exploring the possibility of building a natatorium and that such a facility could generate a small amount of revenue through user

fees. Mr. Hindman responded that staff was still looking into the need and feasibility of a natatorium that could be funded jointly by the City and school district, or the local community college.

The budget work session recessed at 7:06 p.m. for a break.

The budget work session resumed at 7:12 p.m.

3. **LIBRARY SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

Jeannie Johnson, Interim Director of Library Services, presented the Library Services budget by category noting that the proposed budget of \$2,043,116 is \$146,396, or 6.7 percent, below the current year's budget. Ms. Johnson said that personal services accounts for 79.9 percent of total expenditures and that \$58,581 in savings was realized by not funding part-time position vacancies. Ms. Johnson said the book budget was reduced by 25 percent to \$120,870 and audiovisual materials were similarly reduced to \$11,868. Ms. Johnson said that staff was looking at providing more materials via the Internet to fill the gaps. Councilmember Pickett asked if there were any particular categories of books that the Library does not provide customers. Ms. Johnson replied that there weren't any particular categories she could recall because different people will have different tastes and ideas about what types of books should be increased in stock.

Ms. Johnson then presented survey comparisons of per capita book and audiovisual materials inventories among the seven survey cities and noted that Mesquite ranks among the lowest of the seven cities. Ms. Johnson also presented customer satisfaction survey results that showed 87.7 percent of respondents were extremely satisfied with the Library's books and services, which is up 3.2 percent from the previous year. Councilmember Shirley Roberts asked, in light of rising gasoline prices and the current economy, how attendance at the Library has been in recent weeks. Ms. Johnson pointed to a related article on the front page of *The Dallas Morning News* that highlighted that very point, and added that she wasn't sure about adult participation levels, but said the Library is seeing record attendance in the children programs. Councilmember Tarpley prefaced a question by saying he appreciates how the Library staff has been coping with budget reductions and making the most of available resources and asked if the Library should be focusing more resources on electronic media, like downloadable books, as opposed to paper bound books and other traditional print media. Ms. Johnson said that electronic media is gaining more popularity, and while she doesn't foresee books being replaced anytime soon, she does agree that more funding should be devoted to electronic media.

4. **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT**

Zak LaJoie, Director of Information Technology, presented a brief overview of the types of services that the department provides and gave some statistics on the City's Web site. Mr. LaJoie said that since 1998 the number of visitors to the City's Web site has increased from 100,000 to 1.8 million visitors and expects the number to surpass two

million next year. He said the Web site received 60,000 online job applications, 25,000 requests for service and 7,000 animal lost and found postings, all the while operating 99.99 percent of the time with the only downtime coming from required software updates. Mr. LaJoie then discussed several technology enhancements that are proposed and underway, including a new email exchange server that will reduce spam and allow only intended emails to arrive in an employee's email inbox. Councilmember Pickett asked if the new email exchange would allow all the council members to receive an email that may have been originally addressed to just one member. Mr. LaJoie replied that the new unified email system would allow that capability. Mr. LaJoie then discussed a new virtualization technology that will allow the department to consolidate multiple servers into one, fast and scalable server that will increase utilization by 80 percent. Mr. LaJoie concluded his presentation with a summary of projects underway including, the replacement of security cameras at Debusk and KidsQuest parks, mobile data computer replacements for police and fire, police patrol car dashboard digital video replacements, and a new network redesign for the new police building. Mayor Monaco thanked Mr. LaJoie and expressed how appreciative the City Council is for the great work he and his staff does for the City.

5. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

George Mones, Director of Human Resources, gave a presentation on the City's Medical Plan and noted an 11.7 percent declining trend in claims activity the past two years. Mr. Mones said the declining claims activity saved the City \$475,000 between 2006 and 2007 and has enabled the City to keep plan rates the same for two consecutive years. Mr. Mones tied the Plan savings to some of the various programs offered to employees including; 274 participants in Weight Watchers who lost a combined 1,900 pounds, 157 participants in the Naturally Slim program who lost a combined 2,284 pounds, 27 participants in the Stop Smoking program and increased participation at the Mesquite Employee Health Clinic. Mr. Mones said the Clinic saw 1,944 visits by employees and family members and filled 13,038 prescriptions since opening in February of last year.

Mr. Mones concluded his presentation with a summary of proposed Plan benefit changes. Mr. Mones said while rates will not go up, the Medical Plan Advisory Task Force will recommend increasing CIGNA pharmacy co-pays to encourage even greater utilization of the Clinic Pharmacy. Mr. Mones said the cost for generic prescriptions will remain the same, but the co-pay for preferred brand name drugs will increase by \$10, from the current \$25 charge to \$35, and the co-pay for non-preferred pharmaceuticals will increase \$25, from \$50 to \$75 per prescription. Mr. Mones also described a new disincentive for employees who do not get annual physical check-ups. Mr. Mones said that employees who do not receive physicals and associated lab tests between January 1, 2007 and November 30, 2008 will see their rates go up by \$20 per month. Mr. Mones said the \$20 per month rate increase only applies to employees at this time and not family members and added that it's only purpose is to provide extra incentive for employees to get annual physicals. Mr. Mones expressed his appreciation to members of the Medical Plan Advisory Task Force and said that more detailed information on the Medical Plan is contained in their handouts.

Mayor Monaco asked if anyone had any questions for Mr. Mones, and after hearing none, entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion to adjourn was made by Councilmember Tarpley and seconded by Councilmember Roberts.

ADJOURNMENT – 8:18 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 8:18 p.m.