

**MINUTES
CITY OF AMES
304 MARTIN DR. – AMES, TEXAS
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
NOVEMBER 13, 2023
6:00 p.m.**

The City Council for the City of Ames, Texas met in a special meeting in council chambers at the Ames City Hall at 6:00 p.m. Mayor Barbara Domain called the meeting to order at that time. Councilman Eddie White led the prayer, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Mayor Domain conducted the roll call, at that time the members of the City Council who were present were: Mayor Barbara Domain, Michael Trahan, Elizabeth (Liz) Hardy, Eddie White, Alfred Freeman Jr. (arrived late at 6:10 PM). Audrey Harrison was absent.

CITIZEN APPREARANCE

Mayor Domain thanked the citizens for being present, asked them to silence their phones, and if any of the citizens would like to take three (3) minutes to speak to the council. A list of attending citizens is attached.

- Citizen Moises Villareal was present, and he stood to voice his concerns about the condition of Organ Road. Mayor Domain explained that she and Erwin discussed how they could make repairs to the road on a temporary basis pending a permanent solution. Citizen Elizabeth Harris was present, and she also had concerns about the condition of Organ Road as well as the concerns about the dogs that are running loose on their street and are biting their bumpers as they are driving through. She stated that they cannot take their trash to the road for pick up because the dogs attack them when they do. Mayor Domain explained that she spoke to Jennifer Welch about the dogs and was told who they belonged to. The Mayor stated that she would be paying a visit to the owners to talk to them about securing their dogs. Mayor Domain also explained that she reached out to Liberty County Animal Control as well as the SPCA to get assistance with animal control in the city. Liberty County Animal Control does not have room to take any more animals and the SPCA does not provide service outside of Harris County. Mayor Domain will try to reach out to the City of Daisetta to inquire about an interlocal agreement with their animal control department.
- Citizen **Jocelyn Wright** was present, and she stood to explain that she was concerned about the speed limit on MLK South, and she believes that 50 MPH in our small town is too fast. She explained that she contacted TXDOT regarding the speed limit on MLK. TXDOT informed her that a city official would have to put in an official request to have speed study conducted to consider lowering the current speed limit. She also voiced her concern about not being able to walk or ride a bike down the road for fear of being hit. Ms. Wright also stated that she was informed by TXDOT that there is funding available for sidewalks. Mayor Domain stated that she has spoken with a representative from the City of Daisetta and was told about the grant for sidewalks as well and will be looking into applying for the city.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR OCTOBER 30, 2023, REGULAR CALLED MEETING

The council took a few minutes to look over the minutes. Councilwoman Elizabeth Hardy noted that there was an error in the spelling of the Mayor's name. A motion was made to approve minutes for October 30, 2023. Passed unanimously.

Motion made by: Councilman Michael Trahan
Seconded by: Councilwoman: Elizabeth "Liz" Hardy
All in favor: 4 Opposed: 0 Abstained: 0

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS:

1. DISCUSS INCREASING THE MONTHLY SEWER RATES.

Mayor Domain explained that in the council members packets, there is a letter from the law firm, which explains the steps and processes that are required to have the sewer rate increase approved. She also provided in the packets the complete report that shows what we are being charged from Liberty by the base rate of \$0.81 cents per gallon and \$12.12 per gallon if we exceed 200,000 gallons. This will show justification for why we would need to increase the sewer rate. Councilman Alfred Freeman Jr. asked how we would determine if a citizen went over on their base rate usage. Mayor Domain explained that we would get the readings from the water department and the flat rate would be \$44.00 and anything over 4000 gallons would be an additional fee. The mayor and the council members, after further discussion, agreed that they needed to have a workshop to discuss in detail and come to an agreement on what the new proposed flat rate and overage rates would be for the sewer service. Mayor Domain asked Marivious Allen (City Attorney) about the timeline for the process of increasing the rates for the sewer service. Mr. Allen explained that because we offer sewer service to people outside of the city limits, that we would have to have a public hearing to give those individuals the opportunity to determine if they would want the increase or not. The timeline would be 60 days from the first notification. Mr. Allen stated that as of now, increasing the rate is something that we could consider for the following year, since the budget has already been passed. Council woman Elizabeth Hardy and Mayor Domain both had questions about the budget including the proposed increased sewer rate. Marivious explained that the increased rate was on the budget; however, as of now we are looking at the rate that we currently have with the proposed budget as opposed to the budget that was passed. He also stated that we could amend the budget if we need to. Council member Eddie White asked if we should do incremental increases to avoid a significant increase at one time. Marivious explained that we would have to go through the formal process each time we would propose an increase in the sewer rate. After further discussion by the Mayor and the council members on the proposed rates for the sewer service, it was suggested by Marivious Allen that the council members should set up a workshop to determine a proposed tax rate to submit for approval. Marivious stated that to make it clearer, the citizens within the city limits can't appeal the proposed sewer rate increase; however, those who are outside of the city limits can appeal the proposed rate increase and if they get enough signatures to vote and vote against it, we would not be able to pass the rate increase.

2. DISCUSS ZONING WITHIN THE CITY LIMITS OF AMES.

Mayor Domain explained that we want to try to implement some zoning of certain areas so that people will know when they move to the city, that in those zoned areas, they cannot move whatever they want to in those areas. She suggested that the council members need to sit down with a map and look at zoning the areas that they want to zone and what they want to be allowed to come into those zoned areas. Council member Michael Trahan stated that in the current ordinance, that there is zoning language in there that speaks about specific roads. He stated he believes that people do not know and that we should have signs that tell people to come to the City Hall, so they don't pull it in first and then ask questions later. Mayor Domain stated that she believes the problem is because it has been a pull it in first and ask questions later, kind of community that people do not care. She stated that there is an Ordinance from 2018 that states before you move anything into the city that you would have to come to the city and let them know what you're planning. She also stated that as of lately we have been receiving calls from people trying to do things in the city asking what our regulations and guidelines are. Mayor Domain stated that she is getting an updated map so that the council members can conduct a workshop to sit down and determine what areas on the map they want to zone.

3. CONSIDER AND IF APPROPRIATE, TAKE ACTION TO LOWER THE SEWER TAP RATE.

Mayor Domain provided a copy of the sewer tap rate for the City of Liberty and the City of Hardin for reference. The City of Ames sewer tap rate is currently \$800. The City of Liberty charges \$550 for a 4-inch pipe and Hardin charges \$300 for residential. Mayor Domain explained that now we do not have to outsource sewer tap installations because Erwin does the work for us now, so it is not costing as much as before. Also, because we are generating revenue with the installation of the sewer lines that we will not be taking a loss if we lower our current tap rate. Councilman Michael Trahan stated that we have one of the highest sewer tap rates, and that it's excessive. There was more discussion about additional cost for exceeding the depth that the city can dig the lines and how that cost would be handled. Mayor domain stated that she would go back and do her homework on the necessary language that should be included, and she would get back to the council on that. She suggested that they move forward on lowering the rate in the meantime. Marivious Allen (City Attorney) stated that he would advise that we have an ordinance to support the change in the rate. He stated that we can agree to lower the rate today; however, to officially adopt the new rate, we would need a new ordinance. A motion was made to lower the sewer tap rate to \$550.00. Council member Michael Trahan asked if we would need to amend the line item because it only states that we are taking action to lower the sewer tap rate. After further discussion it was determined that the new tap rate would be \$450.00. A motion was made to lower the sewer rate to \$450.00. A Roll Call Vote was Conducted at this Time. All members present were in favor. Passed unanimously.

Motion made by: Councilman Alfred Freeman Jr.

Seconded by: Councilman Eddie White

All in favor: 4 Opposed: Abstained:

4. CONSIDER AND IF APPROPRIATE, TAKE ACTION TO INSTALL CULVERTS IF PURCHASED BY THE PROPERTY OWNER.

Mayor Domain stated that this was another item that was discussed at the last meeting. She pulled the permit fees for the City of Liberty and compared it to our permit fees. Currently our driveway permit fee is \$125.00. She suggested that we may need to go down to \$75.00 which is what the City of Liberty charges for their driveway permits. If we install the culvert, we can then charge \$450 for installation. She spoke to the Commissioner of Liberty County Precinct 1, and he told her that the county currently charges \$450.00 for installation because you must have it inspected. They currently go out and access the area for the culvert and let them know what size culvert they would need to purchase. After the culvert has been purchased, they would install it, backfill it with stabilizing sand, and then cover it with limestone. So, between the materials and labor he says that the county charges \$450.00 to complete the job. Council member Elizabeth "Liz" Hardy stated that's if you don't live on the highway. If they live on the highway those culverts will have to be installed by TXDOT. Council member Michael Trahan discussed the cost of a load of limestone and how it could be expensive. Mayor Domain stated that we would not need a whole truck of material for a driveway. She suggested we could create a little spot back in the back to keep two or three scoops of the material in the back to have on hand when it is needed. Mayor Domain stated she would reach out to the Commissioner again to find out where they get their material and to find out how much they pay for that material. She will look into establishing an interlocal agreement with them to get material at a wholesale price. Council member Elizabeth "Liz" Hardy asked that once the permit is issued, are we doing the work, or will the citizen be responsible for having someone do the work? Mayor Domain answered that we would do the work. Council Member Hardy stated that we would need a cost of what it's going to cost us. Mayor Domain explained that we would not know what it's going to cost you initially because we would not know how much driveway we were going to have to cover. Council Member Hardy stated that her only issue is that we're lowering costs, but our debts are still rising. She is worried that we will not be able to cover our debts if we keep lowering costs that generate revenue. Mayor Domain that even though we are lowering the permit fee, we are adding the installation fee which is something that we do not currently have in place, and it will help to generate additional revenue. Marivious Allen (City Attorney) stated that we would need to create an ordinance to reflect what we are doing with the culvert permit. After further discussion it was decided that we would lower the permit fee for the culvert to \$75.00 and charge a driveway installation fee of \$450.00. A motion was made for the City of Ames to install culverts if purchased by the property owner. Passed unanimously.

Motion made by: Councilman Alfred Freeman Jr.

Seconded by: Councilman Michael Trahan

All in favor:4 Opposed: Abstained:

MAYOR'S REPORT.

Mayor Domain informed the council members that she included information that she wanted them to read pertaining to information about existing lawsuit. She has a meeting this week with rock asphalt and about purchasing asphalt in bulk. Their product comes in big bags, and it compacts itself after you run over it. The product also has a warranty on it and if within three (3) years something happens with the asphalt, they will prepare it for free. She will get more information from the meeting to bring to the council for consideration. Next week on 11/20 Mayor Domain

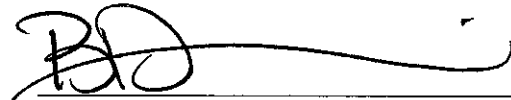
has a meeting with Jordan from SPI. At this time, they should have the report ready regarding the sewer system repairs. We should find out where we are and what the plan is to move forward and what we need to do to repair the sewer system. Mayor Domain informed the council that mobilization for repairing Donatto Street would not be until the first week in December. She also informed them that she would be at the TML Economic Development Conference from November 15th – November 17th. She informed the council members that the pump for Lift Station E has been purchased as of last week. James from SPI should be here Thursday or Friday to install the pump. Also, over the weekend, we had pump at Lift Station C was making a noise or went. Out, but Erwin was able to check it out and fix it. Also, on CR154, tip top end road, Erwin had to pump the water down because the pump over there needs to be pulled out. We contacted James again from PSI he is going to get somebody to go down there and pull the pump for us so that the rubber gasket.

5. ADJOURNMENT.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:05 PM.

Motion made by: Councilman Michael Trahan

Seconded by: Councilman Alfred Freeman, Jr.



Barbara Domain
Mayor



Wellona Godfrey
City Secretary

**SIGN IN FOR
AMES CITY COUNCIL MEETING
REGULAR MEETING
304 MARTIN ST., AMES, TEXAS
NOVEMBER 13, 2023
6:00PM**

The agenda provides for Public Comments during an item entitled Citizen Appearance. If you wish to offer comments, you must register with the recording secretary of the City. The status, which governs this meeting, do not allow the City to address or debate any matter brought forward under this item, but we may request the Council look into any matter brought forward and place the item on the future agenda for action. Your comments should pertain to the matters of the City.

Presentation shall not exceed three (3) minutes. Delegates of more than two (2) persons shall appoint one person to present their views before the City.

NAME	SUBJECT
1. <u>Jocelyn Wright</u>	_____
2. <u>Elizabeth Harris</u>	_____
3. <u>Karen Villarreal</u>	<u>Organ Rd</u>
4. <u>Moises Villarreal</u>	<u>Organ Rd</u>
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____
8. _____	_____
9. _____	_____
10. _____	_____