

710 EAST SAN AUGUSTINE STREET

DEER PARK, TEXAS 77536

Minutes

of

A WORKSHOP MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DEER PARK, TEXAS HELD AT CITY HALL, 710 EAST SAN AUGUSTINE STREET, DEER PARK, TEXAS ON FEBRUARY 20, 2018, BEGINNING AT 6:30 P.M., WITH THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS PRESENT:

JERRY MOUTON	MAYOR
SHERRY GARRISON	COUNCILWOMAN
THANE HARRISON	COUNCILMAN
TOMMY GINN	COUNCILMAN
BILL PATTERSON	COUNCILMAN
RON MARTIN	COUNCILMAN
RAE SINOR	COUNCILWOMAN

OTHER CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

JAY STOKES	CITY MANAGER
SHANNON BENNETT	CITY SECRETARY
JIM FOX	CITY ATTORNEY

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER – Mayor Mouton called the workshop to order at 6:30 p.m.
2. ANNUAL UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES OF THE SOUTHEAST TEXAS HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION AND THE DEER PARK HOUSING MARKET FROM TROY COTHRAN – Mr. Ron Williams, Executive Director of the Southeast Texas Housing Finance Corporation (SETH), gave an overview of the 5 Star Texas Advantage Program that provides down payments and closing costs to eligible families. Through January 2018, the program has provided 106 Deer Park households \$14,000,000 in mortgage funds and \$800,000 in grant funds for down payments and closing costs. The grants do not have to be repaid and the average loan amount is \$137,000. In October of 2017, four years after the beginning of the program, \$2 billion dollars in mortgage funds and over \$100 million dollars in grant funds have been disbursed. In Deer Park, an eligible home buyer must have an income of less than \$82,225.00 with a maximum purchase price of \$331,200 (FHA/VA). The conventional program allows a maximum income of \$114,000 and a maximum purchase price of \$453,100. Beginning February 1, 2018, SETH implemented two new single family programs, HOMESTAR and GOLDSTAR that allows an eligible borrower to receive 2% - 8% of the final loan amount as a down payment and closing costs assistance. SETH also offers first time homebuyers the Mortgage Credit Certificate Program which provides direct tax credit up to \$2000 each year the borrower lives in the home. This particular program helped seven homebuyers in Deer Park in 2017. SETH continues to increase our Multifamily Portfolio.

Currently, SETH is in ownership position of many affordable communities. SETH is the first housing finance agency in the country to require homebuyer's education for single family programs. In the past five years, SETH has educated 21,702 individuals/families with homebuyer's education. In 2016, the SETH Board of Directors granted \$50,000 to the City of Deer Park. These funds were used to install senior citizen oriented exercise equipment.

Troy Cothran, Victory Properties, gave an update of the active housing market in Deer Park. There are 36 homes actively on the market, with seven of those being brand new homes. Currently, 55% of the homes that are for sale are pending contracts. Out of all the homes that are pending, 60% of those homes were under contract in less than thirty days. The concerns for the coming Spring and Summer markets is that there may not be any inventory to sell. Last year the home values did increase slightly, and may increase more this year due to supply and demand. The rates have gone up some, based much on credit scores. In 2017, homes sales were down 4%, reason being, there were no homes to sell. Homes sales are looking good for the year 2018."

Councilwoman Garrison asked, "Where is White Wing Lane?"

City Manager, Jay Stokes, responded, "It is Mr. Lawther's new subdivision off of Pasadena Boulevard.

3. DISCUSSION OF ISSUES RELATING TO RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CITY'S ANIMAL SHELTER ADVISORY COMMITTEE – City Manager, Jay Stokes first spoke of the recent trip the Animal Shelter Advisory Committee made to Mont Belvieu's Animal Shelter. Mr. Stokes also discussed the Animal Shelter Advisory Committee's meeting for the purpose of making recommendations to Council. The Committee voted to recommend testing for all dogs for heartworms prior to adoption, testing for feline leukemia prior to adoption and to increase the fee from \$50 to \$60 to help offset the cost of these tests. The test would only be done for those animals up for adoption.

Councilwoman Sinor commented, "We are looking for ways to make the animal more attractive to guarantee the adoption. I also think, Jeanna Hooker, Animal Control Supervisor, and our Staff have done a good job with the turn around of getting those animals adopted. I know we had another instance, with a dog that passed away right after being adopted. I believe we are also talking about waiting a week before allowing the animal to be adopted, just to make sure the animal is healthy. This is another way to make sure we are adopting out strong, healthy animals and that there are no surprises. There is nothing worse than a family adopting an animal, being excited and something tragic happen, once they get it home."

Councilwoman Garrison asked, "Is the animal shelter going to have a designated area where new animals are brought in?"

Councilwoman Sinor responded, "Yes, I think there are four rooms, the first being a room where they are separated from the rest of the community. There is an area where people can go in to visit the animal, a separate room to bring the animal in to pet, and

play and get acquainted with them. For that week, they would be isolated. A medical room where all the tests can be administered safely.”

Councilwoman Garrison asked, “When is our timeline for the shelter to be ready?”

Public Works Director, Bill Pedersen, responded, “The walls are going up now.”

Mr. Stokes commented, “Hopefully, by the end of this year.”

Councilwoman Sinor commented, “We expect our animal numbers to go up, but we also know that we will be able to take better care of the animals. Mont Belvieu got us excited viewing their shelter. Our shelter will be bigger with a place where they can be groomed, taken care of medically and a place we can be proud of.”

Mr. Stokes advised, “We will come back in the next meeting with the fee schedule change.”

4. DISCUSSION OF ISSUES RELATING TO A RECOMMENDATION FROM THE GOLF COURSE COMMITTEE TO REMOVE THE PRATT TRUSS STRUCTURE AT THE BATTLEGROUND GOLF COURSE – City Manager, Jay Stokes, gave an update on the recommendation from the Golf Course Committee of the Pratt Truss structure at the Battleground Golf Course to include three options proposed for the structure. The first option is to remove the top of the bridge (\$42,000); second option is to remove the top of the bridge and construct new trusses to recreate the bridge’s look (\$167,000); the third option is to repair the existing truss system in place (\$240,000). The Golf Course Committee voted to recommend the lower cost option of removing (and not replacing) the top of the bridge. In providing an assessment of these options, RPS staff has been in consultation with Staff at the Texas Historical Commission and has recommended the City send the Texas Historical Commission a letter to inform them of the steps the City is going to take. No document exists which requires the City to maintain and preserve the bridge in its current design. However, it is recommended that pictures be taken of the bridge prior to the removal of the top structure and the City place some type of monument sign near the bridge, which reflects the fact the bridge in its original form, previously existed at that site. Per the original grant, the City is under no obligation to retain and continue to rehabilitate the top part of the bridge.

Jonathan Griffin, RPS Engineering, gave a recommendation to put together a set of construction plans, specifications and cost estimates for construction to make the project bid ready. The following step would be to develop the engineering concept, which would accrue an engineering fee to get it ready for the pre-bid phase. From this point, we would work with the City to prepare to answer pre-bid questions and concerns and also coordinate the removal of the bridge to not interrupt any golfing events or schedules.

Councilwoman Garrison asked, “If we were to go with Option 2, to replace the bridge just for aesthetics, would it be structural steel that wouldn’t rust?”

Mr. Griffin responded, “It would be galvanized, and anti rust.”

Councilman Martin asked, "Aesthetically, would it look like what we currently have?"

Mr. Griffin responded, "We would make it look as closely as we could. There would be things used such as bolts instead of rivets and make it more modern, but the overall look and feel of it would be very similar to the original structure. We would also paint it to match the original color as well."

Councilman Harrison asked, "How long would it take to tear it down and build it back up?"

Mr. Griffin responded, "To build something new, it would take about 2-3 months. We have this prefabricated and built off site. We would then begin mobilization to bring the structure in, the process of removing and replacing."

Councilman Harrison asked "You build a lot of it offsite?"

Mr. Griffin responded, "Yes, that would be our recommendation. There is space to construct it out there and build it all, it makes more sense to do it inside a controlled manufacturer."

Councilman Ginn asked, "Any idea what the engineering fee will be to?"

Mr. Griffin asked, "We are estimating roughly, \$60,000, just to tear it down. That was before we decided to be a part of pre bid. We are working on a cost estimate."

Mayor Mouton commented, "That is going to include documentation on the bridge just in case it comes back up to be rebuilt."

Councilman Patterson asked, "My understanding is the documentation is going to be sent to the Texas Historical Committee for them to keep record of this?"

Mr. Griffin responded, "Yes, that will be part of it. You will have access to that too."

Councilman Patterson asked, "In your estimate, that includes the engineering fee?"

Mr. Griffin responded, "Yes, it is included. When we itemize everything and list it all out, it might be a little higher."

Mr. Stokes commented, "That would only be a couple of thousand dollars."

Mr. Griffin commented, "We can coordinate with an archival photographer, this is something we still are talking about. My thought is to contact somebody and get quotes to get cost estimates and then provide you the agency information. We could coordinate the photography to be done by the agency or just hand you the information to do it."

Councilwoman Sinor asked, "Is that not part of the bid?"

Mr. Griffin responded, "No."

Councilwoman Garrison commented, "It says prepare archival photographs for historic inventory for each one of them."

Mr. Griffin commented, "That is for the construction cost. I haven't included it in the engineering fee. Construction fees and engineering fees are different."

Councilwoman Garrison commented, "I do not understand why there would be an engineering fee to take a picture."

Mr. Griffin responded, "As engineers, we are not going to go out there and take pictures. We would recommend and hire someone, which would have a fee to do all that."

Mayor Mouton asked, "You would work all that out?"

Mr. Griffin responded, "Yes. We are working on putting together a proposal."

Councilwoman Sinor commented, "Our committee weighed everything out and are all in agreement, based on what we already spent on the bridge and what it has already cost us. There was a time we talked about saving the historical value of the bridge, which I know is important to us. So much of the bridge has already been replaced that it is not really a historical bridge anymore. We are not even being held accountable to keep it historic. The special events can still happen and the trusses on the bridge really have nothing to do with it. I don't think any bridge chooses the golf course because of the top of the bridge. Beautiful photographs can still be taken there at the bridge. We have spent a bundle of money on it already and we just feel for the sake of the golf course and the business, we just need to cut our losses and take the least hit on this and move forward."

Councilwoman Garrison commented, "I somewhat agree, and somewhat disagree. There is a Texas Historical marker out there. What is going to happen to the marker? That bridge will not be there any longer. That is something you all will have to discuss with the Texas Historical Commission, good luck on that one. We are in a little bit different situation now than we were when we spent all that money in 2012. The City, at that time, was trying to manage the golf course and was not doing a very good job of it. Now we have leased it and I want to know how the people at Touchstone feel about this. If they have a problem with the bridge being torn down, I would like to know."

Councilman Martin asked, "How much money was spent on the bridge before 2012?"

Mr. Stokes responded, "I believe the grant amount was \$125,000 back in 1994."

Councilwoman Garrison asked, "There is also a plaque out there on the bridge, that states Shell did something. What did Shell do?"

Mr. Stokes responded, "I think, when it was brought in, there was a team of volunteers from Shell that helped renovate it at the time. The bridge was 100 years old when it came from Coryell County."

Councilwoman Garrison commented, "Too bad no records were kept about this bridge. I know it is falling apart, intellectually, yes, lets tear it down, but emotionally, it is a historic bridge."

Councilwoman Sinor commented, "That has been completely remade. Another thing we talked about with the Committee is that we have so many projects going on. As we all sit up here and know, not all of them have gone well. We are going to be spending a lot more than we planned on more than one project."

Councilwoman Garrison commented, "It is a different situation now. The City is not trying to run the golf course. We have a company running the golf course and the events and weddings can be profitable for them. If they succeed, we succeed. I just think we need to think about that."

Councilwoman Sinor commented, "I just don't think that has anything to do with the trusses on the bridge."

Mr. Stokes commented, "To answer the earlier question, the funds requested and spent in 1994 was \$125,000."

Councilwoman Sinor asked, "What about in 2012?"

Mr. Stokes responded, "In 2012, we spent around \$229,000."

Councilwoman Sinor commented, "We spoke about some very dangerous parts that need to come down. We have been very lucky that no one has been hit in the head already."

Lauren Sistek, Battleground Golf Course, presented a Powerpoint presentation of the history and usage of the bridge. Ms. Sistek spoke of the inquiries from couples about the character of the bridge and ambience of the view. A growth of \$50,000 in 2017 lead the bridge to be the 2018 Couples Choice Award for venues on Wedding Wire. Adding inclusive packages, partnerships promoting local business have increased tourism from out of town guests. Ms. Sistek statted, "There is no doubt that this bridge needs repairs and causing a liability with its current condition. Tom Knickerbocker wanted to bring a statement piece of the course to add to the natural aspect to the lands beauty. The bridge is a key component of the view that we pride ourselves in, without this and developing a new structure, we will lose a lot of revenue in the future."

Councilwoman Garrison commented, "I know a lot of people have their pictures taken out there."

Ms. Sistek commented, "Pretty much every event that comes about, the key component is taking that picture on the bridge."

Councilwoman Garrison commented, "I think we will just have to think about this. I certainly respect the fact that the Committee has made this recommendation. I also have the right, as everyone else does, to differ in opinion. I just think the situation is different now."

Mayor Mouton asked, "Define what you mean by the situation is different now."

Councilwoman Garrison responded, "It is different because the City is not running the golf course anymore, Touchstone is and they are trying to make a profit. If they make a profit, whether it be from golf or from events and planning, if they succeed, then it is good for the City as well. Before, there was no chance to ever come out ahead with the golf course, but there is now."

Councilwoman Sinor asked, "Are you saying that now we have the money to spend on the bridge?"

Councilwoman Garrison responded, "No, I am just saying we have to weigh it both ways and decide is it worth spending \$159,000 to put another structure that looks similar but not the exact same thing. To keep the aesthetics of the bridge so that people can have their pictures made out there. It is a good backdrop, but is it worth \$159,000, I do not know. That is something we will have to decide and vote on."

Councilman Patterson asked, "Is there something we could put up somewhere between the \$40,000 and the \$160,000 that would still leave some kind of decorative without putting a replica of the bridge? Some type of archway where they can hang lights off of that would have this same structure without costing an additional \$80,000?"

Mr. Griffin responded, "There are many prefabricated structures that you can purchase and already pre-designed. Part of the expense is that it is a unique structure that will have to be rebuilt as opposed to putting something back in place that has already been designed. You can look through the catalog and find something that might interest you. I think that would meet your criteria coming in between \$40,000 and \$160,000. You don't have to stop at removing, you can put something to replace it. The options are limitless. Remember, you are just removing the truss structure, so the bridge will still be there. If you choose to put something decorative to make it look nice, that can be done. It would take some research to find out what is out there and to explore the options."

Mayor Mouton commented, "I would like to leave this discussion to the point where the Staff can have some kind of direction of what we might want to see as a majority."

Councilman Patterson commented, "I would go along with what the Golf Committee says. I am sympathetic and sensitive to what I heard tonight in the aspect that it has value to Touchstone and their wedding events. If there is some way that we could put something up there that will not cost \$160,000, that would allow them to have that, then that is what I would like to do."

Mayor Mouton commented, "In defense of Councilwoman Garrison, she is talking more of the historical aspect. I am not sure where it is going to go. It has been discussed, in regards

to what it meant when we got it. The pros and cons of the bridge and if it had any historical value to the City. Nonetheless, we have the bridge here and it is a part of Texas history. Currently, the way it is, we have to replace the top it might look like the bridge but it will not have the historical value other than marking it. It is real simple, it is about cost. Do we really want to spend that money to replace the top of the bridge?"

Councilwoman Sinor commented, "If I remember right, in the meeting, we were grilling you guys over the phone and there was a lot of open ended scenarios about the time and cost."

Mayor Mouton commented, "The \$160,000 was projected to be close to \$200,000.

Councilwoman Garrison asked, "These numbers are not going to be totally accurate?"

Mr. Griffin responded, "It is all preliminary."

Councilwoman Sinor asked, "Lauren, when did you start?"

Mr. Sistek responded, "I have been managing the wedding events for a year and a half. I have had many comments about lights on the bridge. I had a bridal tour the other day, a bride saw the picture on the bridge and she said that is the only reason she came out to the golf course for the tour because she saw the pictures of the carpet."

Councilwoman Sinor asked, "Does Council know that Touchstone is making the conference area into a bride room with makeup mirrors?"

Ms. Sistek, responded, "Yes."

The consensus of the Council is to move forward with the recommendation from the Golf Committee."

5. DISCUSSION OF ISSUES RELATING TO THE DESIGN OF AND WORDING ON THE NEW ELECTRONIC MARQUEE MESSAGE SIGNS – Information Technology Director, James Lewis gave an update on the City's plans to install new electronic signs at various City facilities. Four are replacement signs, and the other is a new installation at the Animal Shelter, which currently has no sign. These include the Battleground Golf Course, Community Center, Municipal Court/Theatre building, Library, and the Animal Shelter. The Golf Course Committee met and heard the request from Touchstone Golf to add the verbiage for the sign to include "Weddings and Event Center." With the Animal Shelter sign, there are two spaces for a donor plaque. Should there be a donor(s), this sponsorship is recommended to sell for \$25,000. There are four different options for the Theater and Courts Building signage; "Theater & Court Bldg.", Municipal Courts and Theatre Building", Municipal Court and Theater Building", Municipal Courts & Theater"

City Manager, James Stokes asked, “The issues are, what comes first, Theater or Court? Do you spell it Theater or Theatre? Do we use Court singular or Courts plural? What is the preference out of those options? Or do you prefer something different?”

The consensus of the Council is option three, “Municipal Court and Theater Building”

6. ADJOURN – Mayor Mouton adjourned the workshop meeting at 7:25 p.m.

Shannon Bennett, TRMC
City Secretary

Jerry Mouton
Mayor