Official Minutes of Regular City Council Meeting

Of the City of Richland, Texas

Mayor Kenneth Guard called the meeting to order on August 11, 2023, at 6:00 PM in the Civic Center of Richland, Texas. Those in attendance were Chief Financial Officer Bruce Thomas, Council members Shirley Thomas, Jodie Farmer, Caren Smith, Jay Tidwell and Mike Weempe, Operations Director Sharon Settlemyer. Interim Chief Winston. There were four (4) visitors present.

Kenneth Guard gave the invocation.

Comments from citizens: None.

There was discussion of the house at 206 N. Milam. Sharon explained that the house was in terrible condition a couple of months ago. Trash all over the yard, yard needed to be mowed, trash piled up in the house. Danielle had taken pictures today, and said it was a tremendous difference from before. Joyce Moro stated she had been taken to jail because of her mother living there in such terrible conditions. She is not allowed to go within 200 feet of the house, so she had to hire two people to clean it up. She sent her daughter to watch and make sure they did the work. Leland Adams stated he understood why the City had done everything, and he helped get it cleaned up and they are still working on it and his properties in town. Mayor Guard asked about the dog that was there. Joyce stated they will be putting the dog down due to its aggressive nature. Caren Smith thanked them for talking to the Council. Mike Weempe made a motion to allow them to continue working on it. Jodie Farmer seconded the motion. Motion carried with a vote of 5 “ayes” and 0 “nays”.

There was discussion of the Minutes of the July 13, 2023, meeting. Mike Weempe made a motion to accept the minutes. Jodie Farmer seconded the motion. Motion carried with a vote of 5 “ayes” and 0 “nays”.

There was discussion of the financial report for July 2023. Sharon explained to the Council that the Municipal Court report for Richland shows that the city is not making enough money to pay payroll most of this year. Caren Smith asked about Angus. Sharon stated they pay $1,500 a month, plus we keep 30% of collections. Caren stated that is something, but not even enough. Mike Weempe made a motion to accept the report. Jodie Farmer seconded the motion. Motion carried with a vote of 5 “ayes” and 0 “nays”.

There was discussion of cell phone use for the Police Department. Sharon stated that officers are using their cell phones all the time, and even watching movies while in the office. Mike Weempe stated that cell phones should only be used when on breaks or lunch. They should never be used if on a call. Use common sense. Caren Smith stated a policy needs to be written, making unprofessional use the first time a reprimand, and the next time termination. Caren Smith made a motion to make unprofessional use a reprimand, and the next time termination. Mike Weempe seconded the motion. Motion carried with a vote of 5 “ayes” and 0 “nays”.

There was discussion of the resignation of Reserve Officer Adrian Hernandez. Sharon stated that Officer Hernandez lives in Decatur, and it is too far to drive. Jay Tidwell made a motion to accept the resignation. Caren Smith seconded the motion. Motion carried with a vote of 5 “ayes” and 0 “nays”.

There was discussion of a salary increase for the police department. Danielle stated Teague pays starting officers $20, then after 6 months $21.50, Sergeants start at $22.50, then $24.50. Fairfield starting pay for officers is $21.36, Sergeant $26.35. Rice starting officer pay is $20. Wortham starting officer pay is $17.50. Mike Weempe stated that Wortham just approved an increase to $19.00. Jay Tidwell stated that he had gone on a fire call and the police car was parked under the pecan tree running for over an hour two times. Interim Chief Winston stated that she had spoken with Officer Lopez about that, and that she had been in the office and gone outside and came back in and told him to turn off the car. Mike Weempe stated if a hose blew, it would be too late to do anything. Caren Smith stated that she believes our officers are more valuable than other departments due to the amount of highway they cover. She stated she thought we must be competitive. We need to hire and look again in six months. She stated she had done the math on $19.00 per hour and it’s less than $40,000. Caren made a motion to table this and look at it again when people are hired. Mike Weempe seconded the motion. Motion carried with a vote of 5 “ayes” and 0 “nays”.

There was discussion of the TMRS Retirement. Caren Smith made a motion to table this and look at it when we do the budget next month. Jodie Farmer seconded the motion. Motion carried with a vote of 5 “ayes” and 0 “nays”.

There was discussion of allowing Interim Chief Winston to take home a police car. Sharon stated that the City had a policy in place that the officer had to live in Richland. Caren Smith stated we should stick with the policy. Mayor Guard stated that he knew there were departments that allowed vehicles to be driven home within a certain number of miles. Winston stated that she was trying to get more income for the city. She was willing to work nights on major accidents, B&W towing vehicles gives revenue to the city. Mike Weempe stated that it is only for work, not to be driven for anything else. Jay Tidwell stated if she must come to the PD to get a car, then turn around and go back to a call, then get gas in Corsicana, it is a wash. Mike Weempe made a motion to allow her to take home 1701 for a ninety- (90) day trial. Jay Tidwell seconded the motion. Motion passed with a vote of 5 “ayes” and 0 “nays”.

There was discussion on Repairing Seized Buick Lucerne and accepting bids to sell. Sharon stated B&W has not given an estimate on repairs. The vehicle was seized along with over $4,000 cash. The city received a check for over $2,900 and the vehicle. Mike Weempe made a motion to table this until we find out how much repairs are. Jodie Farmer seconded the motion. Motion carried with a vote of 5 “ayes” and 0 “nays”.

There was discussion of the Water Report. Caren Smith made a motion to accept the water report. Jodie Farmer seconded the motion. Motion carried with a vote of 5 “ayes” and 0 “nays”.

There was discussion of allowing Operations Director and Court Clerk to take vacation November 27th – December 1st. Mike Weempe made a motion to allow the vacation. Jodie Farmer seconded the motion. Motion passed with a vote of 5 “ayes” and 0 “nays”.

There was discussion of the Ordinance #184 2023 Atmos Mid-Tex RRM Settlement. Jay Tidwell made a motion to adopt the Ordinance. Shirley Thomas seconded the motion. Motion passed with a vote of 5 “ayes” and 0 “nays”.

There was discussion of street repairs. Sharon presented the Council with a list of streets in Richland and how much it would cost for the county to put asphalt down. Caren Smith suggested we put the material on Normandy, as a test. It is one of the more traveled roads and we can see how it holds up. Caren Smith made a motion to put asphalt down on Normandy as a test. Jay Tidwell seconded the motion. Motion passed with a vote of 5 “ayes” and 0 “nays”.

Things to place on next month’s agenda: Budget, Salary Increase for Police Department, TMRS Retirement, Repairing Seized Vehicle.

Meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

These minutes approved by the City Council of Richland, Texas on September 14, 2023.

APPROVED:

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Mayor Kenneth Guard

ATTEST:

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City Operations Director