

City of Blooming Grove  
Council Minutes  
11-4-24

The City Council of the City of Blooming Grove held a regular called meeting on Monday, November 4, 2024 at City Hall. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Mayor Ashley Mahone.

Members present were Mayor Ashley Mahone, Council Members Bill Carroll, Renee Watson, James Jones, Haley Ehly, Sarah Southard, Interim City Secretary Deena Smith, Police Chief T.C. Lawhon and Utility Superintendent Rory Evans.

Minutes-

Renee Watson made a motion and Haley Ehly seconded to approve the minutes of the September meetings. Motion carried.

Visitors-

Randy Bugher, Ceslie Willey, Ricki Crenshaw, Don Price, Carrie Sweeney, Glynn Saunders, Mary Conger, John Conger, Emilie Parten and Kent & Marlene Ferrell.

Public Hearing-

Mayor Ashley Mahone opened the Public Hearing for Special Use Permit for a carport at 404 S. Walker. There were no speakers at the Public Hearing.

Open Forum-

There were no speakers during the Open Forum.

Department Reports-

Administration-

The Interim City Secretary, Deena Smith said everything is going well. She stated that everyone should have received their water bills with the rate increase this month.

Public Safety-

Police Chief TC Lawhon said it has been a quiet month. He said he will be in District court tomorrow and the Reserve Officer has not worked much this month.

Public Works-

Water Superintendent Rory Evans told the council that a 2" line was put in on Hwy 22 from Walton to Hwy 55 and also the project on Second Street and Atkinson Street are complete. He said the City Wide cleanup was done on October 12<sup>th</sup> and everything went well. He told the council he had a TCEQ inspection last week and everything went great and the city passed.

New Business-

Haley Ehly made a motion and Sarah Southard seconded to approve Special Use Permit and variance for a carport at 404 S. Walker. Motion Carried.

Renee Watson made a motion and Haley Ehly seconded to deny the request by Eric Coleman for water tap fees to be lowered to \$1,000.00. Motion Carried.

Bill Carroll made a motion and Renee Watson seconded to table amending the FY24 Budget. Motion Carried.

## Discussion Items-

Mayor Mahone told the council that the owner, Ian Gomez at 709 S. Kerr has asked for a payment plan for his water bill. He had a leak on his side of the meter and his bill was a little over \$1300. Because of timing she had to go ahead and approve this payment plan.

There was a discussion that Juan Zuniga has not worked as much as he said he was going to. Sarah Southard feels that if the city is going to have a part time position then we need someone to work that position. She feels we need more of a presence in this town. She is concerned about people flying down HWY 22 and the main street. She stated that people have been asking her about why we don't have more of a presence in town. TC Lawhon stated that Juan Zuniga has not worked as much as he would like however he is very helpful at court when we have a docket and that he is also helpful in communicating with citizens when there is a language barrier. He has not charged the city for this. He feels he is an asset to the city. Mayor Mahone suggest we take down the full time position for a Police Officer for a little while and run it again a little later where it looks fresher.

Ashley Mahone discussed with the council about Block K that the city owns. She stated that the school is trying to sell their property and that it has went up for bid twice and now that nobody bid they are able to list with a realtor. The school is saying they can't sale it as the whole block because of the city's little parcel. She spoke with Rory about this and Rory stated that this property is needed for water pressure and future growth for the city's water system. The Superintendent Mr. Griggs is wanting to see if maybe the city can gift the school or trade for another piece of property the school owns. Mr. Griggs was unable to be here because of playoffs but would like to come to a future meeting to discuss this. Bill Carroll stated that as the city gets more connections the State of Texas requires the city to have more elevated storage. This particular lot is in the middle of town and mirrors the elevated tank on the east side of town. Haley Ehly said if it doesn't matter what side of town it's on then she would like to see us maybe work with the school district on a solution.

Discussion was made on having limb pick up for the citizens on a set day every month. The council would like for the office staff to contact Shane Richards and see if he would be willing to do this on the same day as bulk pickup by Republic which is the last Friday of every month.

The council discussed the Full Time, Part Time and Part Time II job positions and would like to consider doing away with the Part Time II. The Mayor told the council TC Lawhon has been here for 16 years and has never received longevity pay. Bill Carroll suggested the staff and the Mayor and one council member maybe look at updating the Employee Handbook.

Discussion was made with John Conger the current plumbing inspectors on his process and fees. The Mayor said she would like to maybe streamline this process and make it easier. John Conger said that he is not a third party inspector, his full time job is with the City of Waxahachie. His concern is that if he had to get his own general liability it would not be beneficial to him. The city is going to check with TML to see what options we have and if we can even cover this expense. Bill Carroll stated that this position would be more than the Building Inspector but would be more of a Building Official position. John Conger said that he is very familiar with reviewing plans, permits and inspections.

There was a discussion on a water meter that was damaged at 209 E. Third Street. The homeowner of this address didn't damage his meter but destroyed the neighbors meter box. Discussion was made on maybe charging a Tampering with Meter charge. The only problem is there is no proof that he did this and this happened a few months back so there might not be any cameras in the area that still have record of this. It

has been recommended that the city send a certified letter to the homeowner warning him that the city will not tolerate this behavior and the next time this happens there will be charges for the damage.

Next item for discussion is with Randy Bugher and Ricki Crenshaw in reference to using the city property for patio on the south side of the building at the café at 104 S. Fordyce which the Blooming Grove Volunteer Fire Department owns. Ricky Crenshaw gave the city a copy of the survey. Mayor Mahone mentioned that in order for the city to consider this permit we would need more dimensions and all the setbacks. She said the issue is that the property line for the café is the building itself and he is wanting to use the city property. The Mayor said that the Special Use permit needs to be in the BGVFD name not his name. The council discussed maybe a lease, however Bill Carroll mentioned that the city could not lease this property to BGVFD unless it is available for the entire community all of the time. Haley Ehly mentioned that she would like to reach out to TML and our city attorney to get their legal opinion. The city staff and the Mayor will look into this and see what the city options are.

The Mayor wanted to discuss creating a Downtown Association. She stated that her intent is to have some fundraising for the park and maybe some more murals. The City is really not eligible to have a Downtown Association because it has to have a full time person to manage this. She suggest that we might have to go back to something like the Beautification Committee we had years ago. The Mayor will be checking this.

Interim City Secretary told the council that the hiring process is still ongoing. She stated that two people have tested and we have and five will be tested this week.

#### Executive Session-

Mayor Mahone called the Council into Executive Session to interview for the City Secretary position at 7:55 p.m. The Mayor called the Council back into open session at 8:31 p.m. No Action taken.

Renee Watson made a motion and Haley Ehly seconded to adjourn. Motion Carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

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Mayor Ashley Mahone

Attest:

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Interim City Secretary Deena Smith