

LETTER TO LEON VALLEY CITIZENS
From Mayor Chris Riley
September 8, 2023

CITY COUNCIL MEETING –SEPTEMBER 5, 2023

CRIME CONTROL AND PREVENTION BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MEETING – 6:00 P.M.

The Mayor and City Council act as the Board of Directors of the Crime Control and Prevention District. We approved the August, 2022 minutes and adopted the FY 24 year budget. This special fund is funded by a 1/8 cent sales tax, which was initially established by the citizens of Leon Valley by a vote in 2013. In May, 2023, the citizens reauthorized this tax to continue funding this special district. Annual operating revenues are \$408,800 with operating expenditures of \$352,711. This fund helps to pay police salaries. The ending fund balance at the end of the fiscal year is \$559,295, which will be used for crime control.

The following are highlights of council actions from the September 5th council regular meeting beginning at 6:30 p.m.:

PRESENTATIONS

Fourth of July Report – This annual event was very successful. The Historical Society Pioneer 5K Run/Walk, at 7:30 a.m. had about 150 participants. The Parade, with the theme “Land That I Love”, was at 7 p.m. The Parade was followed by 80’s music by the Spazamatics and fireworks in Rimkus Park, with about 20,000 attending primarily from 78238, 78240 and 78250 zip code areas.

The cost of the event was summarized by Crystal Miranda, Community Relations Director, as follows: Total cost of the event: \$132,062 (includes set-up & staging, advertising, entertainment, miscellaneous and staff overtime). Income from vendor fees and sponsorships was \$61,520 plus the \$98,000 budgeted from the City which totaled \$159,520. Actual cost to the city was \$70,542. This does not include the In-Kind support from 7 entities, as well as staff members who worked all day and were exempt

from overtime pay. Overall, a very successful event with a few incidents of lost children and heat exhaustion. Recommendations for next year include more volunteers/staff, security, and better communication. Thanks to everyone who worked on this event – a true team effort!

Re-Naming Leon Valley Community Center in Honor of Irene Baldrige. Irene Baldrige, former Leon Valley Mayor and City Councilwoman with a total of 22 years of service to this community. As mayor, Irene was instrumental in obtaining a grant from the federal government to build a Senior Citizens meeting place, among many other accomplishments. The Council will take formal action at the September 19th meeting through a resolution to finalize their action. Mayor Baldrige died in May at the age of 94.

REGULAR AGENDA

Short Term Rentals (STR) Proposed Ordinance- This agenda item had been discussed at our Council retreat in July. Based on the discussion, the city attorney drafted a comprehensive ordinance which included regulations for annual registration and use of STR, definitions, restrictions including no signage, limit on number of guests per bedroom, limits on number of vehicles and right to inspect. Additionally, STRs would be required to pay hotel occupancy taxes and maintain a limit of 250 feet between STRs. Enforcement power would include suspension and revocation of STR registration, with a right of appeal. After lengthy discussion, it was decided the Mayor and Council members will red-line the ordinance and return it to the city manager by September 30th. A summary of what each member of the council wants to see included in the proposed ordinance will be presented at the October 17th council meeting for a vote on the ordinance.

Engineering Contract (Request for Qualifications (RFQ)) – Ten engineering firms responded to the City’s RFQ for Engineering Services. A staff committee of five rated these firms and ranked the top three firms: Ardurra Engineering, 6S Engineering and Bain, Medina, Bain Engineering. All three firms had the qualifications. The committee recommended Ardurra Engineering. Ardurra has been our city engineer since 2017. Council directed the City Manager to negotiate with Ardurra on its fee schedule and if unable to reach an agreement on fees, to move to 6S.

Prohibiting No Smoking in the Huebner-Onion Natural Area Park (HONAP)– With the severe drought and the proximity of the HONAP to citizens’ homes, the City Council, with Park Commission support, decided to amend the ordinance to prohibit smoking. There is a fire break between the homes and the HONAP as well. Additional signage will be added to the entryway sign, as well as a sign designating this a Fire Danger Area.

Action on the Proposed Budget for FY 2024: The Council, after a public hearing, again reviewed the FY 2024 budget and voted to approve. There were no changes made to this proposed budget as reported in my August 18th letter to the citizens. Dr. Caldera did give an update on the changes in the library hours beginning October 1st: Hours of library from Tuesday through Friday will be extended by an hour, with a change in the Saturday hours to Noon to 4 pm (from 10 am to 2 pm). I would urge citizens to go online and view the detailed budget. Thanks to the staff and council for their efforts to pass a balanced budget to address the community’s needs for the upcoming fiscal year.

Discussion of an Ordinance Authorizing the 2023 Property Tax Rate: The no-new-Revenue tax rate provides the City with about the same tax revenue it spent the previous year. This rate is calculated at \$0.421067. The Voter-approval tax rate is last year’s rate plus a 3.5% increase for operations and sufficient funds to pay debts, which is calculated at \$0.500397. Staff recommended and Council’s consensus was to stay at the same tax rate as last year, which is \$0.484739. The 20% homestead exemptions will reduce the average tax bill by \$126. per year. For FY 2024, the projected fund balance in the General Fund is: \$2,877,030 in the capital reserve fund and \$1,000,000 in the Emergency fund, for a total of \$3,877,030. This ordinance will be voted upon at the September 19th council meeting.

Amending the Rules of Meeting Decorum & Conduct – The only changes discussed were to confirm a 6 pm start time for executive sessions and to prohibit powerpoint presentations without the permission from a staff person, the Mayor, or vote by the governing body. The amendments will be voted on at the September 19th meeting.

Our next regular city council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 19th ,6:30 p.m. at city hall. Boy Scout Troop 515 will attend and lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance, as well as earn a badge for Community Service.

JUST A REMINDER

Sunday, September 10th at 1:00 pm: 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony.

The local Audie L. Murphy American Legion is sponsoring this annual event at the Leon Valley Conference Center.

Sunday, September 10th at 3 pm: Earthwise Living Committee

Speaker Series. Jaci Randal, Executive Director, Bexar Branches Alliance, will answer your questions about **trees**. This event will take place at the Leon Valley Library. Free and open to the public.

Enjoy our first cool front, expected to arrive sometime next week (unless the prediction is wrong) with some much needed rain! Please do not hesitate to contact me or any councilmember if we can be of assistance. We are here to serve you.

Sincerely, Chris

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