

WORKSHOP
MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 2011
6:00 P.M.

A Workshop of the Anahuac City Council was held in the Council Chambers of Anahuac City Hall located at 501 Miller Street, Anahuac, Texas on Monday, January 31, 2011 at the above noted time.

There were present:

*Sue Hawthorne
Cheryl Sanders
Linda Palmer
Danny Thompson
Kimberly Upston
Richard Ferguson
Dan Irby*

*Mayor
Mayor Pro Tem
Councilwoman
Councilman
City Secretary
City Attorney
Public Works Director*

Those not present were:

Dana Evans

Councilwoman

Guests:

*Dayna Haynes
Joel Venable*

*The Progress
Texas Water Development Board*

At 6:00 p.m. Mayor Hawthorne called the meeting to order. Mayor Hawthorne led the invocation and Councilwoman Palmer led the pledges to the American and Texas flags.

There were no comments from the audience.

The first item discussed was mediation for employees and supervisory training for all supervisors. Mayor Hawthorne said she felt that this was not an emergency situation and she thought that maybe when a new City Administrator was named that person could conduct training for the supervisors. Councilwoman Palmer asked how many supervisors were in place at the moment. Dan Irby answered two. Councilwoman Palmer said her thought is that we all need to continue training. She said she felt we could wait until the staff was at full capacity.

Councilman Thompson asked how long it would be until we have a new City Administrator or an interim in place. Mayor Hawthorne said she was going to place an item on the February 14th agenda to hire an interim City Administrator and the company that she is working with already has a candidate. She also said we have already placed an ad for City Administrator in the papers and also on the Texas Municipal League website.

Ordinance implementation and enforcement was then discussed. Councilman Thompson said he placed this item on the agenda because there is not a complaint form that citizen's fill out to complain about ordinances or report someone that is not following the ordinances. He said all complaints are taken verbally at the moment and he feels there should be a paper record of each complaint.

Mr. Thompson went on to say he knows of instances when neighbors had called to complain about neighbors violating ordinances when the caller is violating the ordinances themselves. He also said he knows that the callers violations were overlooked and the neighbor then written tickets for violations.

Councilwoman Palmer said she understood the need for a form to be signed but, there are people in the community who would not report violations if they knew they would have to file an official complaint form. Councilman Thompson said Mark Hainley could take the complain form to the person to have them sign to save them the trouble of coming to City Hall. Richard Ferguson then explained that the people might not be willing to sign the report if a signature was mandatory on the form but, there would still be a violation of the ordinances going on and that needs to be addressed.

Councilman Thompson said that if the person complaining was not willing to sign the form then the violation was not worth reporting. Mr. Ferguson said there would still be a violation that is happening and that Mark could still go to that address and find the violation for himself.

The Mayor then moved to a later item on the agenda being the discussion of the pros and cons of entering into a long-term contract with Trinity Bay Conservation District (TBCD) to purchase treated water. Joel Venable, a representative from the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), was on hand to voice his opinion and what he believes to be the TWDB's opinion regarding regionalization.

Mayor Hawthorne said we have a short term contract with TBCD to purchase treated water and when Councilman Thompson had asked about our license, she thought about this option for water.

Mayor Hawthorne said she had a meeting with Dan Irby and Scott Wible about the option and also she had an informal meeting with Joel Venable. She stated Mr. Venable has always been in favor of regionalization of water. She said the City has been approved for a loan from the TWDB in an amount around \$600,000.00. She said the City started by using that money to rehabilitate the water plant but, have since realized that that money would be better used to replace old water lines throughout the City.

Mr. Venable started by saying he is the area representative for the TWDB. He spoke about the loans the City has outstanding and the uses of the loans. One of the loans is to improve the quality of water throughout the City. He then spoke about the maintenance that has been done on the water plant. He spoke about the advantages of regionalization of the water supply. He said he spoke about it with his board already and they are in agreement that this will work. He spoke then about the need for council to analyze all of the information and make the most informed decision possible.

Mr. Venable also spoke about the water meters. He said it was an area of concern to the TWDB because the city is losing revenue because of the old meters. He said automatic read meters are the way to go. He said meter reading is a hard job and that there is a lot of room for error in having a person reading the meters every month. He said it would improve the operations of the system, the public relations, and improving the operating cost of the utilities.

Mr. Venable said to change of scope of the loan should be very easy because when it was done the lines and other items were already lined out and marked. He said our engineers wouldn't have a problem changing it because the specifications would be the same as the other water line project that was already done. He said the City needs to move quickly to spend the money on the loan before the loan is taken back. He said money from the TWDB is becoming limited and those that do not spend the money are having the loans taken back. Councilwoman Palmer asked about how much time the City has to make a decision. Mr. Venable said he would think that six months wouldn't be a problem.

Mayor Hawthorne asked if the Council was to give an unofficial consensus to find out more information and to give her permission to meet with Trinity Bay Conservation District that would show that we are working on the issue. Mr. Venable agreed that it would help and he suggested that the City not cancel anything and keep moving forward on the project until the decision is made to change the scope of work from the water plant to the water lines and meters. He said it would be around six months until the water plant repairs would start.

Councilwoman Sanders asked if the City could ever go back to producing water with its plant after this agreement to purchase water was done. Mr. Venable said there might have to be another permit gotten from TCEQ but, it should not be a problem.

Councilwoman Sanders expressed concern with outsourcing the water production. She said we wouldn't have any control over the quality of the water. Mayor Hawthorne pointed out that we would still have control over the distribution of the water. Councilwoman Sanders said if someone complains about water pressure we would not have any control. Mr. Venable said that the only thing we would be doing is buying the water and we would not be relinquishing any control over pressure or distribution.

Dan Irby said because of the old ductile lines in the system we do have to treat the water when it comes from TBCD. He said by the time it gets to the City and goes through the ductile iron lines it loses chlorine. He said that once the lines were replaced that we would still have to keep a small injection system like the one that we have now.

Councilwoman Sanders asked if we would need more operators. Mr. Irby said that we would need the ones that we have now and no additional personnel or licenses. Councilwoman Palmer said we would not be relinquishing any control over the citizen water. She said the only thing that would change is making a long term contract with someone to purchase water. Mr. Irby said he does not see spending that kind of money on a plant to get it to produce great water if the lines are still the old ductile iron ones that would compromise the water quality anyway. Mr. Venable said we would still have problems with the Texas Commission Environmental Quality (TCEQ) because of the water quality in our lines.

Mayor Hawthorne asked what involvement has the City had with TCEQ since we have started buying water from TBCD. Dan Irby said the only involvement we have had with them since we started buying water is from people using the old ductile iron lines.

Councilwoman Palmer asked how we know that Trinity Bay would be in business long-term. Mayor Hawthorne said TBCD supplies water to all of mid Chambers County that is not in the City limits. She said that everyone that is east, south, and north of us gets their water from TBCD.

Dan Irby said the water we are buying now is treated by TBCD and the water we would buy from the Navigation District is untreated and we would have to treat it. Councilwoman Sanders said it would be a big savings not having to treat the water.

The Council was in agreement to look into the matter further and place the item on a future agenda to take action.

Richard Ferguson asked Mr. Venable if he knew of any other regionalization that have taken place that are close by. Mr. Venable said Bolivar used to produce its own water and now it purchases water from LNVA. He stated at one point they wanted to build one big plant to take care of the water needs of TBCD and LNVA. He said they built two plants instead and neither plant is operating at an efficient level.

Councilwoman Sanders asked if the problems we are having with TCEQ, in the progress of the water plant improvements, should have been caught by our engineering firm. Mr. Venable said he does not know that he only found out about the problem last Thursday when he called his representatives in Austin and they said that there was a problem with the specs of the project.

Dan Irby asked if the City would be obligated to use the same engineers for the project if the City changed the scope of the project. Mr. Venable said it was up to the City on what engineer they used. He said he would be very careful changing on the project because of all of the work already done.

Mayor Hawthorne said it would be beneficial that we use an engineering firm that has wetlands experience when we start looking at that project. Councilman Thompson asked what other communities have wetlands that are close that we could look at as examples. Mr. Venable said Winnie, Hankamer, Baytown, Mauriceville, and Beaumont have wetlands. Councilman Thompson asked how much did the plant in Hankamer cost. Mr. Venable said he would have to check because at the time TBCD bought a lot of land but built small wetlands with room to expand if needed at very little cost.

Councilwoman Palmer asked about the long term effects of wetlands. Mr. Venable said the life expectancy of a wetlands is around 35 years but, because of the low maintenance of the wetlands the cost savings would be great. He said the wetlands bacteria does not give off the sulfide gas of the conventional plants.

Councilwoman Sanders asked what percentage of the water lines needs to be replaced. Dan Irby said about 50 percent of the lines need to be replaced.

Councilman Thompson said he believes the Lee Street problem would disappear if the lines were looped from Davis to Lee. Dan Irby said looping would solve part of the problem but, there is a two inch line on Lee Street that is supposed to have a maximum of ten homes tied into it. He said at the moment 34 homes are tied into that two inch line.

Mayor Hawthorne then moved the discussion to amending the surplus items list and the minimum bids that will be received on the remaining items. Councilman Thompson said nothing can be done with this item until we can take action.

Council then discussed creating an ordinance that regulates parking and other items pertaining to fire lanes. Mayor Hawthorne said she had several citizens ask her about this issue. Richard Ferguson said there is a state statute about fire lines already and it would just have to be enforced. He said the state statute may not address making designated fire lanes when there is not a fire hydrant present. He said he doesn't believe the City has an ordinance that designates fire lanes.

Discussion was had about how many fire lanes there are in the City. Councilwoman Palmer asked if Dollar General had asked that the City address this issue. Councilwoman Sanders said she has an issue because the delivery trucks park in the fire lane and drivers can not see around them. Richard Ferguson said he is sure that there is nothing in our ordinances about fire lanes and he will check the state statute.

Mayor Hawthorne would also like him to check into handicap parking spots.

Mayor Hawthorne moved discussion to collecting fines and receiving traffic tickets through the Municipal Court of the City of Anahuac. She said Constable Langford has already spoken to the City Secretary about this and they are getting together the things that are necessary for this to happen. She said that there needs to be a meeting with the Judge, the Constable, and the Court Clerk to get the process in place.

Discussion moved to an invitation to fund CWSRF projects from the Texas Water Development Board. Mayor Hawthorne said the invitation is from a previous attempt to fund wetlands that were denied for the first time. She said that it doesn't require action right now. Dan Irby suggested that we use a different engineering firm if this project goes through.

Mayor Hawthorne then moved discussion to the public works department personnel job descriptions. Dan Irby said he had gotten job descriptions from other cities our size, TCEQ and other places to put together the job description. Mayor Hawthorne asked if Mr. Irby had the original job descriptions marked with the changes. Mr. Irby said he did have that and would send it electronically to everyone.

Councilwoman Sanders asked about the cost between getting water from CLCND versus getting water from TB CD. Mayor Hawthorne said she believed the cost for that would be \$0.25 per thousand from CLCND and it is \$1.30 per thousand from TB CD. She went on to say that Mr. Irby had said he would not need to hire people to fill the vacant positions on the staff if we keep buying the water from TB CD.

Councilwoman Sanders asked who is working at the water plant. Dan Irby said Bret Hernandez from the maintenance department is now training to operate the plant. He said he is doing very well with his training. Mr. Irby said there are samples and things that still need to be done at the plant and afterwards they are concentrating on maintenance or line locates. If the plant was started the public works department would have to hire another person.

Dan Irby stated that he was speaking to a gentleman this morning and he suggested that if we decided against purchasing water that we still took the loan money and spend it on water lines and keep the reservation with CLCND for raw water. Mayor Hawthorne said preliminary conversations with TB CD have been favorable.

Discussion moved to possible items to be added to the agenda on February 14, 2011. Council decided to add things to the agenda by the Wednesday before the meeting.

At 7:38 p.m. the workshop was adjourned.


Kimberly Upston, City Secretary
City of Anahuac


Sue Hawthorne, Mayor
City of Anahuac