

**MINUTES  
CITY OF AMES  
304 MARTIN DR. – AMES, TEXAS  
WORKSHOP CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
JANUARY 29, 2024  
6:00 p.m.**

The City Council for the City of Ames, Texas met in a Workshop Meeting in council chambers at the Ames City Hall at 6:00 p.m. Mayor Barbara Domain called the meeting to order. Mayor Domain conducted the roll call, at that time the members of the City Council who were present were: Mayor Barbara Domain, Michael Trahan, Elizabeth (Liz) Hardy, Eddie White, Alfred Freeman Jr., and Audrey Harrison. Councilman Eddie White led the prayer, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**WORKSHOP AGENDA ITEMS:**

**1. CONSIDER AND DISCUSS TO INCREASE SEWER RATES FOR 2024**

Mayor Domain stated that they discussed increasing the sewer rate to \$44.50. Councilwoman Hardy stated that she thought the new rate would be increased to \$55.00. It was determined that the proposed rate increase was \$44.60 for the sewer in addition to the cost of the trash service. That would make the average bill with one trash can \$61.60, which is a \$17.10 total increase for residents. Mayor Domain stated that she agrees that there needs to be an increase to offset the excessive overage charges that the City of Liberty is billing us. However, she does not agree with such a drastic increase at once. She suggested that we take into consideration that most of our residents are on a fixed income, and they may not be able to afford that much of an increase, because they budget down to the penny. She suggested that we do the increase in increments instead. Councilman Trahan inquired about going to the adjustable way of billing customers based on the meter readings from the water department. Mayor Domain stated that we haven't put that way of billing in place, because we were waiting for the rate increase to go into effect first. Councilman Trahan stated that using the adjustable billing method may cause some residents bills to be lower. Mayor Domain explained that it is not necessarily correct because we would be billing at the base rate of \$46.60 and adding to that if, the resident went over the agreed upon adjustable fees. The lowest bill with the increased base rate would be \$61.60 and may increase based on overages. Councilwoman Hardy added input about the financial dept that we have due to the overages that the City of Liberty is charging and that we must look at things from the business standpoint so that we can keep the city in business. Mayor Domain asked if we wanted to consider offering a 10% senior citizen discount to those residents that qualify. It was discussed that we would have to specific the age threshold to be qualified as a senior citizen. Councilwoman Hardy suggested that if there is an issue with a senior that can't pay their bill, then we can come together and establish a financial aid application to help them out. Mayor Domain suggested that we look for resources that can help people in low-income communities pay their utility bills and have that information available to the residents. After further discussion it was



determined that the proposed base sewer rate increase would be \$44.60 for residential and \$49.60 for commercial. Cedar Grove RV Park in being charged one flat rate of \$495.00 per month. We will need to revisit the RV Park and determine what their new sewer rate would be. It was suggested by Councilman Trahan that we use the meter readings to possibly charge the RV Park for the gray water that comes back. Marivious explained that we have a settlement with Cedar Grove RV Park, and we agreed upon the \$495.00 because they complained that they were being overcharged. Mayor Domain asked how long we agreed to them paying the \$495.00. Mr. Allen will look at the agreement that we have in place and get back to us on the details. At the conclusion of this workshop item, it was agreed that residential customers will be charged using only the base rate and commercial customers will be billed by meter readings on the adjustable rate. Mayor Domain will reach out to the water department to begin receiving the meter readings going forward.

## **2. CONSIDER AND DISCUSS 2024 BUDGET CHANGES**

Mayor Domian provide clarification to the proposed changes to the budget.

A pay increase for Mayor would add an additional \$16,012.08, the two (2) new employees would add an additional \$3,840, a \$2.00 an hour pay increase for Erwin would add an additional \$3,000.00, a Part-Time Clerk (3 days a week @ \$10.00 an hour) would add an additional \$9,680.00, and a Part-Time Code Enforcer (3 days a week @ \$15.00 an hour) would add an additional \$21,600. In addition, Mayor Domain explained that the money for these additions is already a part of the budget. It is allocated in the money that would not have been spent from the budget at the end of the year, we just need to reallocate them to the proposed changes. Marivious asked if we were sure we would make the proposed amount on the sewer taps and Mayor said yes. This prompted her to provide information on a tiny home development that will potentially be built in the city. This development if approved will bring in good revenue. It would be at least 70 taps and sewer lines to install. The developers plan to add a laundry facility and a convenience store. This will generate jobs in the community, sales tax revenue, and additional property taxes each year. Councilman Trahan suggests that if the tiny home community was approved that the city should hire a civil contractor to ensure that the developers are not cutting corners and that everything is built in accordance with their plans and specifications. Mayor Domain explained that moving forward, we will create a drawn down spreadsheet to better track our spending and help us stay on budget. Marivious stated that we would need to contract Bruno and Tervalon to continue our annual audits. Mayor Domain stated that Melanie contacted her about creating a contract with Swaim and Brents to conduct our annual audits. Bruno and Tervalon is currently working on finishing 2021 and then they will start 2022. We have reached out to Swaim and Brent and they have agreed that they will go through our financials and explain to us what we need to fix for 2023 to clean up our books and keep us on track moving forward. Councilman Trahan asked about the progress that Emmitt has made. Mayor Domain explained that Emmitt is ready to move forward with court. We need to get the code enforcer started so that we can issue citations. She also explained that he has the economic board put together we now must have the members approved by council.



### **3. CONSIDER AND DISCUSS ORDINANCES**

Mayor Domain explained that when we get the interlocal agreement with Dayton, we will be able to move forward with using Waldy to begin the process of enforcing the ordinances that we already have in place. She explained that Waldy would go out and verify that the resident was out of compliance and then they would be given a letter accompanied by the ordinance that they are in violation of. This letter would explain how much time they would have to correct the violation before further action is taken. Councilman Trahan asked about the maximum amount that could be charge for each violation. The city cannot charge fees more than \$500 per ordinance.

One of the ordinances that needs to be considered is an ordinance for dogs and cats. We have had a few people complain about the dogs on Organ Road biting their bumpers and in one case, ripping the bumper off the car.

Another ordinance that needs to be considered is for unsanitary and unsightly conditions of private premises. If a resident's grass has grown over 12 inches, the city will cut the property and charge it to the owner.

#### **MAYOR'S REPORT**

A citizen approached Mayor Domain to inquire about declaring a designated day for Lawrence Morris on 03/16/2024. He did a lot of things for the community of Ames, and they think we should honor him. Mayor Domain checked with John White, and he stated that we could do it, but it would have to be approved by the council. Mayor Domain is waiting for Mr. Chavez from Dayton to get back with her to discuss the interlocal agreement for code enforcement. She also inquired about the boot allowance for the maintenance department. She was told that there was a \$100.00 allowance for boots, and she wanted to verify that before she moved forward. Councilman Trahan stated that, we work in sewer, so the boots are necessary and is a part of the employee's PPE. Mayor Domain also expressed that Erwin was interested in purchasing waders to assist when he is getting down in the manholes to keep him dry from the sewer water. The council members agreed that it is a part of his PPE and is required to do his job. Mayor Domain received an email from Eichelbaum Wardell to schedule a date and time for mediation with the City of Liberty. They wanted to know who all would be attending the mediation so that they will be prepared. Mayor Domain suggested that everyone should put their names down to be on the safe side. Councilwoman Harrison said that it would also show that we are concerned about what is happening and that we do want to come to an agreement. The council went into discussion on the current bill that we received from the City of Liberty. So, it seems as if they are charging us for daily overages and monthly overages. Councilwoman Hardy stated that according to some contract or agreement that we have, that there is a daily overage charge and a monthly overage charge. Mayor Domain stated that she is going to try to find that contract because charging us both a daily and a monthly rate is not right. Councilman Trahan pointed out that the agreement about the daily and monthly overage charges is printed on the bottom of the bill that the City of Liberty send us each month. Mayor Domain asked how long the contract with the City of Liberty was for? No one was sure about the time frame of the contract. Mayor Domain will go back

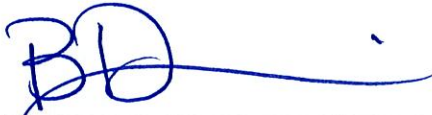
and look at the contract to see what it says. According to Marivious, the contract was written in favor of the City of Liberty, but the unfortunate part is that both parties signed it, so it is legal.

Mayor Domain also discussed looking into reinstating the City of Ames zip code. She is also planning to have the mailboxes that are on highway 90 moved because of the safety concern. She also informed the council that Comcast has reached out to her, and they are planning to come out and install internet up to the tip top end road. Also, she is planning to meet with Brazos Transit to expand the route so that the residents from Ames Wood and the second sub will not have to walk to the Bakers Subdivision to catch the bus. Mayor Domain will reach out to the schools to see if their building and trades program would build bus stops for us and donate them.

#### 4. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:53 PM.

**Motion made by: Councilwoman Audrey Harrison**  
**Seconded by: Councilwoman Elizabeth "Liz" Trahan**  
**All in favor: 5 Opposed: Abstained:**



Barbara Domain  
Mayor



Wellona Godfrey  
City Secretary