

**STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTY OF WALLER
CITY OF HEMPSTEAD**

BE IT REMEMBERED that on the 3rd day of July A.D., 2023 at 6:00 P.M. the City Council met in a Regular Meeting at the Hempstead City Hall, 1125 Austin Street, Hempstead, Texas, there being present, to-wit:

Erica Gillum, Mayor
Lonnie Garfield, Mayor Pro-Tem
Cindy Pearce, Councilmember
Karon Neal, Councilmember
Nora Hodges, Councilmember (Via Zoom)
Mildred Jefferson, Councilmember

Bridgette Begle, City Attorney
Sabrina Alvarez, City Secretary

1. Call to order and invocation.

Mayor Erica Gillum called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M. and Mayor Pro-Tem Lonnie Garfield gave the invocation.

2. Pledge of Allegiance.

The Pledge of Allegiance was given.

3. Public Comments.

Jay Lewis runs a local youth ministry and wants to help the citizens with getting their yards cut free of charge. David Burky would like to give a presentation before the City Council to explain the benefits of hemp. He also stated that driving around town he sees a lot of stop signs that are faded or missing.

4. Consideration and action on Professional Services Agreement with Johnny Wallin for a Heavy Equipment Operator on an as-needed basis for the Public Works Department.

Public Works Director Fredrick Alexander stated that in order to get caught up with all the damage Nextlink has done in the city, he would like to hire a contractor as a needed basis for a Heavy Equipment Operator. The city would rent a piece of equipment and use him as needed. Mayor Erica Gillum stated it was a good decision. Councilmember Mildred Jefferson made a motion to approve the Professional Services Agreement. Mayor Pro-Tem Lonnie Garfield seconded the motion and carried unanimously.

5. Discussion and action on a Resolution of the City Council of the City of Hempstead, Texas submitting a proposed City Charter amendment to increase the City Council terms from 2 years to 3 years and Mayor terms from 2 years to 4 years.

Attorney Bridgette Begle stated that the first step would be to amend the Charter, we would call a Special Election on November 7, 2023, and the voters would vote on the change. We would have to bring an Ordinance in July and call the election in August. If the voters do vote for the amendment, then the change would commence in May 2024. Councilmember Nora Hodges asked about the terms and the cost for the special election. Councilmember Cindy Pearce stated she did research and said that the school board has 3-year terms, Mayor terms in Brenham, TX is 4-year terms. Attorney Bridgette Begle stated that it would be the following May 2026 when it would take effect. Councilmember Nora Hodges stated since the Charter would have to be amended to make term changes, she recommended going back to a City Administrator position and keeping the terms for council members and Mayor as is. Councilmember Nora Hodges stated that rather than having a special election which will cost extra, put this on ballot for the May 2024 election. Councilmember Mildred Jefferson made a motion to approve the Resolution with a May election. Mayor Pro-Tem Lonnie Garfield seconded the motion and carried unanimously.

6. Discussion and action to authorize the mayor to submit a Request for Qualifications for City Attorney.

Councilmember Cindy Pearce asked what the purpose was of wanting the RFQ's. Mayor Erica Gillum stated that there are projects in the city. She stated as we grow with new developments, we need counsel that can deliver the service who is experienced in PID's and TIRZ's. Mayor Pro-Tem Lonnie Garfield made a motion to table the RFQ's. Councilmember Cindy Pearce seconded the motion. The motion carried with ayes with the exception of Councilmember Mildred Jefferson.

7. Discussion and action on a Resolution amending the City of Hempstead Cemetery Policies and Procedures to eliminate interment cost cremains for residents and non-residents of Hempstead.

Councilmember Mildred Jefferson made a motion to table the Resolution. Councilmember Karon Neal seconded the motion and carried unanimously.

8. Consideration and action on Walk Permit for the Watermelon Run For the Fallen.

Councilmember Mildred Jefferson made a motion to approve the Walk Permit subject to the getting the liability insurance. Councilmember Cindy Pearce seconded the motion, and it carried.

9. Discussion and action on an Internal Policy for any employee that communicates or releases sensitive or restricted personnel or customer information without going through Public Information Request Act may be subject to disciplinary action to include immediate termination.

Councilmember Cindy Pearce stated that it is a much-needed policy, the city needs to operate in dignity and by law. Councilmember Mildred Jefferson made a motion to approve the policy. Mayor Pro-Tem seconded the motion and carried unanimously.

10. Presentations-

A. Mayor's Reports-

1. Watermelon Festival- July 14th-15th. – Everyone is invited, lots of vendors, the Brown Sugar Band will be performing. There are 16 candidates.

2. July 4 Fireworks at the Park-The Annual July 4 fireworks will be at the City Park; First Baptist Church will be giving out snow cones.

3. August 5, 2023 – Family Fun Day at the Park. 9:00 AM to 12 PM; Sponsors are welcome to donate. - Anyone that is willing to donate school supplies, please do.

4. External and Internal Utility Forensic Audit being executed-future Townhall to discuss when Audit is completed. -External AND Internal audit being performed, Mayor Erica Gillum will have a future townhall meeting to explain findings.

5. Award on Master Drainage Plan. - The city got awarded the grant, this is much needed so when the city goes out for future grants its gives points.

B. Councilmember's Report- Mildred Jefferson- We are sending our most heartfelt condolences to the family of Rev. Cube Charleston. Please keep them in your prayers.

Nora Hodges-Expression of Appreciation to everyone who attended and participated in the Townhall Meeting.

Karon Neal- I would like to thank Mr. Frederick (Kookee) Alexander for the follow up with a citizen that had an issue with water at her residence that he was informed about at the utility workshop. Ms. Nora Hodges and I attended the newly elected officials training on June 28, it was highly informative.

11. Adjourn City Council Meeting.

Councilmember Karon Neal made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:06 P.M. Councilmember Mildred Jefferson seconded the motion, and it was carried.

PASSED AND APPROVED this the 17th day of July, A.D., 2023.

APPROVED:

/s/: Erica Gillum, Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/: Sabrina Alvarez, City Secretary