

Council Minutes June 1, 2021

STATE OF TEXAS §

COUNTY OF TARRANT §

CITY OF BEDFORD §

The City Council of the City of Bedford, Texas, met in Work Session at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 2000 Forest Ridge Drive, on the 1st day of June, 2021 with the following members present:

Michael Boyter	Mayor
Amy Sabol	Mayor Pro Tem
Cindy Almendarez	Councilmembers
Dan Cogan	
Ruth Culver	
Rob Gagliardi	

constituting a quorum.

Staff present included:

Jimmy Stathatos	City Manager
Michael Wells	City Secretary
Molly Fox	Communications Director
Maria Joyner	Finance Director
Andrea Roy	Development Director
Jeff Williams	Police Chief

STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION

The Strategic Planning Session began at 6:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER/GENERAL COMMENTS

Mayor Boyter called the meeting to order.

- **Council Strategic Planning Session to include discussion regarding the Council's visions, goals and related topics.**

Discuss Council Mission Statement

Mayor Boyter read the current Mission Statement as follows:

Be responsive to the needs of the community.
Demonstrate excellent customer service in an efficient manner.
Provide for a safe and friendly community environment,
Foster economic growth.
Protect the vitality of neighborhoods.
Encourage citizen involvement.
Support and develop arts and culture in Bedford.

Council Minutes June 1, 2021

Mayor Boyter asked Council if they were comfortable with these items as read or were there any needed amendments. There was discussion on adding language, including breaking barriers for inclusion, fostering inclusion and diversity, acting in a transparent manner, and communicating and educating Council's actions. There was further discussion on the current mission statement, examples of mission statements from other cities, and a vision statement and goals for the Council. Council was of the consensus for Mayor Boyter and Councilmember Cogan to develop a new mission statement to be presented at the next Council meeting.

Discuss Council Rules of Order and Procedure

Mayor Boyter read the Code of Conduct portion of the Council Rules of Order and Procedure as follows:

We the members of the Bedford City Council, in a spirit of cooperation, hereby adopt the following code of conduct. These rules will help us to create a positive environment to best serve the interests of the citizens of Bedford.

Address the merits of the issues - no personal attacks.

Focus on representing the interests of all citizens.

Attempt to resolve personal conflicts among Council Members internally before speaking publicly.

Assume positive intentions - don't look for hidden agendas.

Observe written rules of order. Wait until you are recognized by the Presiding Officer to speak.

When others are speaking, listen with an open mind.

Recognize that inappropriate public disclosure of confidential information can be detrimental to the City and its citizens.

Understand that "majority rules." Once a vote is taken, agree to disagree and move on. Recognize that a majority view is now the City's policy.

Coordinate all requests of city staff through the City Manager.

There was discussion on adding language related to professionalism and barring cell phones on the dais. Council was of the consensus to add the following two items to the Code of Conduct:

"Represent the citizens of Bedford in a positive and professional manner at all times" and "Refrain from outside distractions as much as possible during meetings."

Discuss a possible Charter Review Commission, including Ethics and other issues.

City Manager Jimmy Stathatos stated there was a previous discussion on possibly amending the Charter to incorporate the ethics guidelines and processes. City Secretary Michael Wells stated the Charter requires the Council to hold a public hearing every five years after the Charter is amended to determine if there is a need to appoint a Charter Review Commission. He stated the last amendment to the Charter was in 2014 and Council voted not to appoint a Commission in 2019. He further stated Council does not need to appoint a Commission to put potential Charter amendments on the ballot. There was discussion on the process for reviewing ethics complaints and changes that can be made to the Code of Ordinances related to the City's Boards and Commissions. Council was of the consensus for Councilmembers Cogan and Culver to review potential amendments to the Charter.

Discuss a possible homestead exemption and tax rate adjustment

Council Minutes June 1, 2021

Mr. Stathatos stated that staff has explored ways to be more financially and logistically efficient, including looking at the City's tax rate and exemptions. Staff has looked at different scenarios for the homestead exemption and tax rate. He discussed the benefits of a homestead exemption and stated an exemption would not go into effect for the next fiscal year if one is not selected prior to the end of June.

Finance Director Maria Joyner presented an overview of the City's property tax, the senior tax rate exemption, a comparison of tax rate exemptions with neighboring cities, and various homestead exemption and property tax rate options and their effect on the budget.

Mr. Stathatos stated the information on the homestead exemption is important for future goals; however, there is an opportunity for a budget that includes a property tax rate decrease without affecting City services for the current year. He confirmed the City would be better served by not addressing the homestead exemption at this time. Council was of the consensus to examine a property tax rate adjustment if there is an opportunity to do so without affecting services. They further agreed that if there was an opportunity to return money to the taxpayers that it be done through a property tax adjustment rather than a homestead exemption. There was discussion on cost savings, pay for public safety employees, employee retention, and the costs of the new Center at Generations Park.

Discuss a potential Master Parks and Trails Plan

Mr. Stathatos stated the last parks master plan was completed in April 2016 and that a plan must have been done within the previous five years to be eligible for grants from the state. He asked Council if they wanted to have trails as part of the plan and discussed soliciting resident feedback regarding what they would like to see with the trails. He stated both a parks master plan and a trails plan can be done at the same time, though they do not necessarily need to be the same document. There was discussion on grants helping fund tennis courts; COVID-19 increasing residents' use of the trails and parks; determining the comprehensive use of each parks as part of the total system; making the trail system more engaging; the process for developing a master parks plan; greenspace and the possibility of purchasing land for parks; and potential improvements to the trails, including shade, expansion, connectivity, art, and flowers. Mr. Stathatos stated he would bring a professional services agreement to develop a parks master plan to Council at a future meeting.

Discuss plan for improving the Audio/Visual performance at City Hall

Communications Director Molly Fox stated the current system is outdated and is no longer supported. The goals for a new system include a comprehensive, easy-to-use solution, maintaining social media streaming capabilities, and including closed captioning and remote broadcast capabilities. She discussed the process for upgrading the system and potential features, including the ability to search for certain words spoken during meetings, live captions, social media broadcasting, live or remote production capabilities, new microphones, conference room upgrades, and equipment warranties and support. She discussed the next steps in the process, including bringing the upgrades to Council in July with installation in September. There was discussion on sole source vendors; current audio/visual issues in the Council Chambers; funding for the upgrades coming from the Public, Educational and Governmental (PEG) Channel Fund; bigger televisions for the Council Chambers; solutions for audio/visual issues at other City facilities; issues with the City's PEG channel and cable providers; surveying residents about where they get their information; enhancing City-wide Wi-Fi capabilities using COVID-19 relief

Council Minutes June 1, 2021

funds; sound issues when playing videos in the Council Chambers; and ongoing maintenance costs for the new system.

Discuss a potential Bedford Citizen's Academy

Mr. Stathatos stated citizen's academies are a new concept similar to fire and police citizen academies but focused on other city departments. He asked for feedback from Council on their desire for such an academy for Bedford. There was discussion on interest from the community on things going on with the City; that such academies are common in other cities; opportunities for citizens to get more involved; avenues to inform citizens, including those that are unable to attend such an academy; the academy as a leadership forum; enticing people to take part in the academy; and an attendance policy. Council was in support of the concept for a Bedford Citizen's Academy.

Open discussion

Council discussed the following ideas for the future: reviewing the master plan for the City; a comprehensive review of the Code of Ordinances; a capital assets strategic plan; lowering the tax rate; the Parks Master Plan; increasing and improving communication with the residents, including surveys; examining the cost obligations with Generations Park; creating an action plan for the Performing Arts Center by the end of the year; a second phase for Generations Park, to possibly include tennis courts and a skating rink; the street improvement strategic plan; an economic redevelopment plan; economic development zones; Wi-Fi capabilities throughout the City; the City's Boards and Commissions; mural projects; code enforcement; the Bedford Commons ordinance; the Generations Park pro forma; a sidewalk improvement plan; charging stations for smart cars; and ensuring the trails are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and discussing their use with runners and cycling groups.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Boyter adjourned the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

Michael Boyter, Mayor

ATTEST:

Michael Wells, City Secretary