

The Austwell City Council met for its regular monthly meeting on Thursday, May 12, 2022, at the Community Center. Three council members, Secretary Jodie Lerma, and citizens attended. Mayor Bonnie Mutschler called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and led the pledge of allegiance to the flag. There were no announcements and no public comments.

Item 5: Staff Reports

- (a) The Secretary's Report submitted by Jodi Lerma included the Water System Aging Summary as of May 11 and the City Balance Sheet as of April 30.
- (b) Rene Rodriguez of Rene's Water Operations presented the water systems report, which was approved. Print copy will be submitted.
- (c) County Commissioner Blaine Wolfshohl did not attend the meeting, but City Commissioner Andy Biery presented an update regarding recent developments on the Pier Project. The grant to pave the parking area, install new street lights, and rebuild the pier has been approved and funded. The issue concerning property ownership has been resolved, indicating that the park is owned by the City of Austwell. Utilizing an inter-local agreement, the County will continue to maintain and operate the park on behalf of the City and will receive and administer the grant for the improvement and pier replacement on behalf of the City. The Environmental Review Process has been initiated, and it is expected to take six to nine months for permitting. Then construction of the pier will begin.

Motion to accept Staff Reports was made by Commissioner Biery, seconded by Commissioner Torres, and passed unanimously.

Item 6: Minutes for March 22 and April 4

Minutes of the March 22, 2022, meeting were presented, with special attention to Item 10 regarding the 2022 City Council Election, which was canceled because neither position on the ballot was opposed. Minutes of the Special Meeting on Monday, April 4, 2022, which included a tour of grant-funded projects, were also presented. Motion to accept both sets of minutes was made by Commissioner Biery, seconded by Commissioner Torres, and passed unanimously.

Item 7: Results of May 7, 2022, City Election for Mayor and for Council Place 1

Andy Biery was the only candidate filing for Mayor. Amy Ancira was the only candidate filing for Council Place 1. Due to these facts, the City of Austwell was authorized to cancel the election, saving the election fee of \$4,000. On Election Day, both candidates were deemed "elected". Both candidates were sworn in by outgoing Mayor Bonnie Mutschler. Andy Biery assumed the responsibilities of Mayor at this point in the meeting.

Item 8: Grant Projects Update

All grant spending and improvement projects are underway. Generators are ordered, slabs are in place, and auto-transfer switches are installed. Waiting for delivery of generators and additional problems caused by supply deficiencies has caused issues in meeting dates previously cited. This has the potential to cause problems in meeting deadlines established by TCEQ for remediating previous violations and taking steps required by the Emergency Preparation Plan. TCEQ has been notified, but has not yet responded. Vendors have been notified in an attempt to reduce time required for deliveries.

Citizen committees are working on projects that can be handled locally by volunteers. Street repairs continue. Street signs are being surveyed and those that are missing are being ordered. Fencing repairs at the ballpark (a project directed by Philip Sawyer), at the water plant, wastewater plant, and water well #1 are in progress. New doors are being installed at all locations that have doorways. In September, generators will be installed at water plant locations.

A major project that will begin shortly is the remodeling of the old City Hall under the direction of Henry Lerma.

Item 9: Rene's Water Operations Contract Renewal

Council members reviewed the performance of and compensation to Rene's Water Operations for water and sewer services, and considered an increase in monthly payments from \$4,160.00 to \$4,500.00 for a two-year contract to run through June 1, 2024 (8% increase over previous contract). Documentation was added to the contract to affirm Independent Contractor Status for Workers Compensation requirements. Motion made by Council Member Torres, seconded by Council Member Ancira, and passed unanimously.

Item 10: Bureau Veritas Contract

Mayor Biery presented information regarding the services available from Bureau Veritas, an independent building examination provider that performs building review and inspection services to municipalities that do not have their own building departments. They have a qualified plumbing inspector who resides in Seadrift and who is available to perform plumbing inspections for the City of Austwell, on demand, for a fee of \$125 per examination. Contracting with this company will allow the City of Austwell to utilize this inspection service, thereby completing all inspections required for a building project in the City of Austwell. Council member Torres moved that a contract be developed between the City of Austwell and Bureau Veritas for this purpose. Council member Ancira seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Item 11: Henry Lerma's Proposal for Renovation of City Hall


The contents of the city hall building on Gisler Street have been moved to storage by volunteers on city work days. The plan that Mr. Lerma has developed replaces electrical equipment, walls and ceiling, plumbing, cabinetry, flooring, doors and windows, and heating and air conditioning. Mr. Lerma will be the general contractor, utilizing volunteer labor and some donated materials. All workers will be licensed and insured. Total cost of the project is \$28,511.28. Grant funds will be used for purchase of materials only. Council member Torres moved to accept the proposal; motion was seconded by Council member Ancira and passed unanimously.

Item 12: Nomination of Dwight Mutschler for Appointment as Municipal Judge

In order for the City to begin the process of removing abandoned, derelict, and hurricane-damaged buildings, the City is taking the first basic step in establishing an enforcement mechanism for ordinances. This appointment will require Mr. Mutschler to attend training on behalf of the City and acquire the necessary qualifications to perform this role. The appointment is for a two year term. City Secretary Jodi Lerma will serve as Clerk of the Municipal Court. Mayor Andy Biery made the motion to appoint Mr. Mutschler as Municipal Judge; motion was seconded by Council member Amy Ancira. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 13: Adjournment

Mayor Andy Biery adjourned the meeting at 8:05 PM.



Andy Biery
Mayor