

The Austwell City Council met for its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, January 10, 2023, at the Community Center. Mayor Andy Biery called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. In his opening statement, he referenced the frequency of weather-related incidents in South Texas coastal areas and the importance of enforcing construction requirements in order to increase the safety of Austwell residents. He announced that notices had been sent regarding properties that would need to be removed or repaired in order to meet City regulations.

Public Comments

Citizens ask for clarification of directions for disposal of debris resulting from clean-up projects. The use of modified shipping containers for storage and/or living space was presented. In regard to repair and/or removal of historic buildings, discussion focused on what made a building "historic" and the safety aspects of older buildings. Questions regarding the inspection process and the schedule for the process were discussed.

Staff Reports

The secretary's report included financial statements included account balances at First National Bank-Port Lavaca and the account at Wells Fargo Bank that is still open. Also, year-to-date profits and losses, and aging report. Also, it was reported that two cats had been removed by the county animal control department .

Water Department Director Rene Rodriguez gave an update on recent services by Mercer Controls and a summary of actions that are taken by the water department when freezing weather affects the city's water supply and its distribution. He also reported a leak at Well#1 and a summary of samples taken and reports made.

County Commissioner Wolfshohl was not present at the meeting but it was announced that construction would soon begin on the bayfront park.

6. Minutes

Minutes for the November 15, 2022 meeting were read and approved by the city commissioners.

Motion
Second
Result

7. Emergency Generator Installation, TCEQ Enforcement Action, SEP Acceptance, Fine Waiver, Remaining Grant Status

After the freezing weather experienced in 2021 resulted in TCEQ fines, generators were installed at water service facilities. Those have now been approved by TCEQ, and the City is no longer under enforcement by TCEQ.

A workday on Saturday, January 21 will focus on

8. 2022 Audit Status

Word has been received that the audit of 2022 financial records is nearing completion. This is the first official audit of City finances since 2001.

9. Interlocal Agreement/Grant Funding CDBG MIT MOD

Grantworks, Refugio County, City of Austwell Drainage, Culvert, and Street Improvements

Grant monies totaling a million dollars have been approved for the purchase and installation of new culverts and manhole covers and for paving repairs to improve drainage in the city,

Motion
Second
Result

10. FY 2023 Budget Impact of CDBG MIT MOD Grant; Establishment and Funding of Outside Organization to Administer "Friends of Austwell" Projects for Home and Community Improvements (\$18,000)

Motion
Second
Result

11. Setting Date of Inspection and Public Hearings for all Properties that Received Notice of Ordinance Violations in December 2022

Individual hearings will be held regarding inspection results of properties on February 7, February 21, March 29, and April 18. Bureau Veritas will make inspections and report results to the City.

Corona monies

Motion
Second
Result

12. Use of Shipping Containers as Storage Buildings/Tiny Houses

Discussion involved the consideration of an ordinance to deal with requests for installation of "tiny houses" made from shipping container as homes or storage units. Guidelines for dealing with one unit reportedly already installed within city limits and procedures for future procedures were presented. Council members agreed that more research is necessary before dealing with the issue.

Motion
Second
Result

13. Individual Mowing Bids for City Parcels

Council members discussed procedures for determining assignment of mowing duties for various properties. More information is needed before decisions can be made on this item.

Motion to table
Second
Result