



Physical Address: 501 South Main Street

Mailing Address: PO Box 228

Rhome, Texas 76078

Telephone: 817-636-2462

[www.cityofrhome.com](http://www.cityofrhome.com) | [citysecretary@cityofrhome.com](mailto:citysecretary@cityofrhome.com)

Mayor  
Jo Ann Wilson

City Council

Mayor Pro-Tem,  
Place 3

Elaine Priest

Place 1

Josh McCabe

Place 2

Michelle Tye

Place 4

Sam Eason

Place 5

Ashley Majors

City  
Administrator

Cynthia Northrop

City Attorney

Carvan Adkins

City Secretary

Shannon  
Montgomery

Fire Chief

Darrell Fitch

Interim

Police Chief

Brody Brown

Public Works

Director

Sean Densmore

## MINUTES OF VISIONING/BUDGET WORKSHOP OF THE RHOME CITY COUNCIL

Meeting Date: Saturday, March 20, 2021

Location: **VIA TELEPHONE CONFERENCE**

MEETING START TIME: **8:30AM**

### Call to Order and Establish a Quorum

Mayor Wilson called the meeting to order at 8:36am, called roll, and announced a quorum of Council Members present.

#### **Council Members Present:**

Mayor Jo Ann Wilson

Mayor Pro Tem Elaine Priest

Council Member Josh McCabe

Council Member Michelle Tye

Council Member Sam Eason

Council Member Ashley Majors

#### **City Staff Present:**

City Administrator Cynthia Northrop

City Attorney Carvan Adkins

City Secretary Shannon Montgomery

Fire Chief Darrell Fitch

Interim Police Chief Brody Brown

Municipal Court Clerk Kristi Adams

Public Works Director Sean Densmore

### Public Presentations and Input

*The Council is not permitted to take action on or discuss any presentations made to the Council at this time concerning an item not listed on the agenda. The Council will hear comments during this designated time. Request form, or email, must be submitted to the City Secretary, via email to [citysecretary@cityofrhome.com](mailto:citysecretary@cityofrhome.com), prior to 4:00pm to be recognized.*

No Public Presentations were made.

### Visioning / Budget Workshop

#### **A. Introduction – Review of Roles and Responsibilities (Estimated 20 minutes – City Administrator/City Attorney)**

City Administrator Northrop welcomed Council and Staff to the workshop and gave a brief overview of the workshop's purpose:

- Review Comprehensive Development Plan progress and accomplishments
- Confirm and prioritize remaining and new priorities in preparation for next budget
- Provide Staff high-level direction on projects; streets, facilities, water/wastewater

City Attorney Adkins provided a summary of the roles and responsibilities of the Mayor, Council, City Administrator, and addressed questions from Council.

City Attorney Adkins began with an over-simplified view, stating that the Mayor/Council, as a board, sets the Vision/Goals and makes policy for the City while the City Administrator implements the policy and handles the day-to-day operations of the City.

Adkins stated that the Roles of Council include Financier, Employer, Buyer and Policymaker and discussed each one:

- Employer – responsible for compensation of City Staff and for providing safe working conditions for all employees.
- Buyer – responsible for making large purchases and managing bids and for assuring that money is spent wisely, and for the best value.
- Policymaker – identify the needs of the citizens and formulate a plan to meet those needs, requires officers to work together, from the City Council’s vision, the administrative staff of the City takes direction and goes about its daily work. The goals of the City should be clear – without clear direction, the effectiveness of the City Council can be diminished. Council must create policy and communicate it for implementation.

Next discussed was the roles of the Mayor and City Administrator:

Mayor – Emergency Management:

- Top officer representing the City in emergencies, unless this role has been delegated and in the City of Rhome, this role has been delegated to the Fire Chief
- In the event of a riot or unlawful assembly or to preserve the peace, may order closing of certain public places, which also states the Mayor can call the Texas National Guard for assistance.

Mayor – Signatory and Ceremonial Duties”

- Communication with the Public
- Being the public face of the City
- Issue proclamations

City Administrator – “Professional Operations Manager”:

- Manage Day-to-Day operations of the City:
  - Allow Mayor and Council to concentrate on policymaking
  - Provide advise and information to Mayor/Council
  - Administer the municipal business and the governing body of the municipality and ensure that the administration is efficient
- Implement City Policies

City Attorney Adkins concluded with the Checks and Balances:

- Mayor/Council makes policy with communications from Mayor and reports from Administrator
- Administrator implements policy
- Administrator manages day-to-day operations and gives reports to Mayor/Council.

## **B. Review Comprehensive Development Plan (Estimated 25 minutes – City Administrator)**

City Administrator Northrop reviewed the City’s Vision and department accomplishments.

## **C. Review Survey Results (Estimated 15 minutes – City Administrator)**

City Administrator provided Council with a rundown of the City’s survey results regarding resident input on community planning and addressed questions from Council.

Northrop stated the purpose of the survey – public engagement, feedback from residents and creating a benchmark for future surveys.

City Administrator focused on the following survey results:

- Assets/Strengths: small town/location, Council/Staff, and Room for growth
- Weaknesses/Improvements: water, roads/drainage, negativity, code enforcement, and economic development
- Opportunities to Pursue: roads/drainage, economic development – downtown, facilities, look for ways to bring unity and curbside recycling
- Challenges/Threats: growth, infrastructure – roads, water, wastewater, and negativity

**D. Discussion of Departmental Priorities, both existing and new (Estimated 2.5 hours – City Administrator/Dept Heads)**

City Administrator Northrop provided a brief rundown of department priorities.

Each department head provided an overview of their department, accomplishments and priorities, and addressed questions from Council.

*Police Department – Interim Police Chief Brody Brown:*

Interim Police Chief Brown provided a listing of the department's accomplishments and priorities.

Accomplishments:

- New technology
- New tasers to enhance officer safety
- Updated vehicle graphics
- Upgraded to fiber

Priorities:

- Implement Evidence Management Software/Hardware
- Organize, Audit property/evidence room
- Purchase new radio system
- Explore possibility of patrol vehicle leasing
- Improve animal control services

*Fire/EMS – Fire Chief Darrell Fitch:*

Fire Chief Fitch provided a brief overview of the Fire Department, including its Mission, Core Values, Organizational Structure, Station, Coverage, Calls for Service, Personnel, Apparatus, Equipment, Grants, Services Provided, What to Watch for in 2021, Audited Financials, Apparatus Replacement Plan, 2021-2021 Budget, 2021-2026 Capital Budget, and Top Budget Requests.

City Administrator Northrop called a short break at 10:15am.

City Administrator Northrop reconvened the workshop at 10:20am.

*Public Works – Public Works Director Sean Densmore:*

Chris Erkut, NewGen Strategies & Solutions, provided a summary of the previously presented Water & Wastewater Rate Study from the February 25, 2021 Council to show the need of rate action. Erkut showed a regional rate comparison, multiple rate scenarios and summarized his presentation with the following items and questions for Council to consider, along with an action plan:

- Staff recommends Scenario 4 to meet the critical needs of the business:
- Council to affirm or provide direction key business decisions.
  - How should capital be funded?

- What level of O&M expense is appropriate?
- Rate Action:
  - Immediate adjustment to wastewater rates is warranted and at a minimum is warranted
  - At Minimum, Rates must be adjusted no later than October 2021
- Review Rates again as part of FY2023 Budget Process (Summer of 2022)

Council Member Eason asked for an agenda item to discuss the rates at the next meeting and also asked if the presentation could be placed on the City's website to inform the citizens. Council Member Majors echoed the request for information to be placed on the website.

Public Works Director Densmore began his presentation with a highlight of what Public Works is – the combination of physical assets, management practices, policies, and personnel necessary for government to provide and sustain structures and services essential to the safety and general welfare for its citizens. Densmore stated that for the City of Rhome, the Public Works department serves as water/wastewater, streets, parks, code compliance and facilities.

Densmore continued his presentation with Department:

Strengths:

- Water/Sewer Master Plans are completed, allowing the City to plan for future water/sewer needs
- Staff Experience, allowing Staff to tackle complex and emergency situations in an efficient and timely manner
- Water Storage Capacity, current storage capacity meets and exceeds the current and near future needs
- WWTPs have the capability to switch to alternative power

Weaknesses:

- Aging Equipment – leaves the department vulnerable to equipment failure and costly repairs
- Aging Infrastructure – leaves the city vulnerable to excessive maintenance, replacement costs and/or plant failures
- Funding – rate structure has not kept pace with demands while costs have increased
- Emergency Power Capabilities – city lacks the capability to transfer all water sites to alternative power

Capital Equipment Needs:

- Backhoe - \$115,000
- Dump Truck - \$90,000
- Two Work Trucks - \$74,000
- PW Administrative Assistant - \$39,000
- Replace Computers - \$3,000

Capital Projects

- Current - 2019 Bond Project – East WWTP
- Future – West WWTP
- Future – Chemical, Scada and electric transfer switch upgrades at all sites
- Future – Well #6 Radium treatment system and site improvements
- Future – Ground Storage Tank Improvements
- Future – Sewer line evaluation and replacement

Street Department:

Public Works Director Densmore provided Council with examples needed road repairs throughout the City. Densmore also discussed the different types of repairs, including proper preparation of those needed repairs. Road repairs are needed to prevent complete road replacing. Densmore also provided examples of types of road repairs and areas around the City that need repairing. Council Members Majors provided additional areas of needed repairs.

- Strengths
  - Funding is available to contract road repairs up to \$50,000
  - Leveraging partnership with Wise County assisted repairs and maintenance on large projects
  - Thoroughfare Master Plan Completed
- Weaknesses
  - Funding is available but need maintenance contract to expend over \$50,000 on road repairs
  - Lack of Street Department and proper equipment requires contractors to perform basic road repairs
  - Lack of street evaluation program and mapping needed to prioritize road projects and maintenance

Densmore continued with proposed budget options for the street department by completed either by contract or in-house and options for street repairs and provided pros and cons of each.

Public Works Director Densmore concluded his presentation by seeking feedback from Council for the following:

- Is Micro Seal an option for road maintenance projects?
- Desire for future road projects?
- Type of road material?
- Desire to install curb and gutter on future projects?

Code Compliance:

Mission Statement – Deliver exceptional service gaining compliance with Codes and Ordinances adopted to protect the public health, safety, and welfare of all residents, business owners and visitors.

Goals – Work with the citizens of Rhome to achieve compliance in violation within the first 30 days and to increase education to help citizens reduce violations

Budgetary – Property abatement to remove substandard structures - \$15,000

Parks and Recreation:

Mission Statement – Enhance the quality of life by providing safe, well-maintained parks and public places; preserve open space

FY2021-2022 Equipment – mower and weed eater - \$2200

Capital Project – By-Well Estate Park – estimated at \$262,640

*Municipal Court – Municipal Court Clerk Kristi Adams:*

Mission Statement: To establish trust as a court representative in the Community – a trust that is earned from the successful operation of the Municipal Court of the City of Rhome, Wise County, Texas; and to encourage and uphold the highest quality of judicial service as a neutral entity, serving all parties in each case equally, fairly, courteously, and with the utmost respect using the following principles and practices;

- Service to our community, promoting openness and access to the procedures and operation of the Municipal Court,
- Professionalism based on honesty, integrity, and an awareness of basic human right values in response to every defendant;
- Commitment to fairly interpreting, analyzing and following ordinances passed by the City of Rhome City Council,
- Teamwork of an impartial Judge, State’s Attorney (Prosecutor), and Court Staff to ensure that each individual XX fair and equal treatment under the law while appearing in or before the Municipal Court of the City of Rhome, Wise County, Texas.

Accomplishments:

- Secured a contract with a software company to assist in streamlining court processing of citations
- Updated the City of Rhome's Municipal Court webpage to streamline online navigation of citations, communication with the court, and ticket payment options.
- Have succeeded in going through multiple years of backlog files and have brought 95% up to date – the other 5% should be caught up by end of this fiscal year
- Have inventoried last 3.5 years of closed court files for retention purposes according to the Texas State Library Retention Schedule for Justice and Municipal Courts
- Have accomplished submitting 95% of open but inactive files to collections

Goals:

Within 1 year:

- Update file cabinets to locking cabinets
- Apply glass protection screens (film)
- Locate adequate space to hold in-person court hearings/trials

Within 1 – 2 years:

- Locate adequate space to accommodate additional court staff
- Update audio/video equipment (wireless/recordable)
- Purchase security equipment for bailiff as required by OCA
- Hire part-time assistant court personnel

Within 2-3 years:

- Transition part-time assistant to full-time court clerk.

Priorities:

- Hardware and software upgrades
- Facility/accommodate Municipal Court Needs
- Install bullet-proof glass screen in court reception/lobby area
- Purchase two new horizontal file cabinets that lock to secure court files as required by Office of Court Administration
- Utilize Court Technology Funds to purchase Audio/Video/Telephonic equipment for Court Dockets
- Utilize Building Security Funds to purchase metal detection wands, tasers, etc. as required by Office of Court Administration

**E. Lunch Break (Estimated 1 hour)**

City Administrator Northrop recessed the workshop at 12:20pm.

City Administrator reconvened into Workshop Session at 1:02pm.

*City Administrator Northrop resumed Agenda Item D.*

**D. Discussion of Departmental Priorities, both existing and new (Estimated 2.5 hours – City Administrator/Dept Heads)**

*Administration – City Administrator Northrop:*

Northrop stated that Staff tried to keep administration lean with all of the other department priorities. Northrop showed the need of a Building Official/Code Compliance position in FY2022-2023.

Economic Development – City Administrator Northrop:

City Administrator Northrop stated that the Comprehensive Development Plan identified Economic Development and Downtown development as a key project. Northrop provided the steps needed for Economic Development:

- Zoning – Narrow focus for downtown area
- Development Codes
- Business Focus Group
- Economic Development Committee
- Economic Development Plan
- Regional Chamber

Northrop provided feedback from business visits she and Mayor Pro Tem Priest did prior to Covid. Mayor Pro-tem shared that all business owners were excited the City was encouraging economic development and wanted to help the City.

**F. Discussion of Budget, Budget Scenarios and Implications (Estimated 45 minutes – City Administrator)**

City Administrator Northrop provided a summary of the current budget, tax rate history, tax rate comparison, and current staffing levels.

Northrop provided five budget scenarios and implications to provide a starting point for Council discussion:

Bond Debt scenarios for various Facility Scenarios:

- New Issue of Certificates of Obligation:
  - Amount Borrowed: \$2,000,000.00
  - Term (years): 25
  - Interest Rate: 2.50%
  - Increased Payment (3 years only) \$50,000.00
  - Temporary Tax Rate Increase: \$0.0329
  - Average Monthly Tax for \$225K Home: \$6.17
- Potential Debt Payable from Ad Valorem (I&S) Taxes: Re-vote of failed 2020 Bond Election in November 2021:
  - Amount Borrowed: \$4,750,000.00
  - Term (years): 25
  - Interest Rate: 2.50%
  - Increased Payment (3 years only) \$118,750.00
  - Temporary Tax Rate Increase: \$0.0782
  - Average Monthly Tax for \$225K Home: \$14.66
- Public Works Capital Project: \$3,750,000 – WWTP project that needs immediate attention and are part of the PIF for TWDB Funding:
  - West Wastewater Treatment Plant
  - Chemical, SCADA, and electrical transfer switch upgrades at all sites
  - Well #6 Radium treatment system and site improvements
  - Ground Storage Tank Improvements
  - Sewer line-evaluation and replacement
- PW West WWTP Capital Project: Revenue Bond Impact – Potential Debt payable from Water/Sewer System Revenues (Assumes placement with Texas Water Development Board)
  - Amount Borrowed: \$3,750,000.00
  - Term (years): 30
  - Interest Rate: 1.40%

- Increased Payment (3 years only)           \$153,942.46
- Amount Borrowed:                           \$3,750,000.00
- Term (years):                                20
- Interest Rate:                                1.30%
- Increased Payment (3 years only)       \$214,139.40

Northrop finished her presentation with questions for Council to consider:

- Street Option preference?
- Economic Development – Downtown District or Main Street focus?
- Facility needs?
- West Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements?
- Water/Wastewater rate adjustment?

**G. Mayor/Council Discussion, Feedback, and Direction (Estimated 1 hour – Mayor/Council)**

Mayor Wilson stated that the consensus of the Council is to look at different bonds for the November election – roads, equipment, facilities and have the residents choose. Wilson asked Staff to research and prepare information for Council pertaining to the different bond options.

**H. Wrap Up/Next Steps (Estimated 15 minutes – City Administrator)**

Council Member McCabe asked how the City can address the water and negativity issues from the Community Planning survey. Mayor Pro Tem Priest suggested using the newsletter to show what the City is doing to address the survey results.

**Adjourn (Estimated 1 minute)**

City Administrator Northrop thanked everyone for attending and their time.

Mayor Wilson adjourned the workshop session at 2:57pm.

**Minutes approved the 8th day of April 2021.**

*Jo Ann Wilson*  
 Jo Ann Wilson,  
 Mayor



*Shannon Montgomery*  
 Shannon Montgomery, TRMC  
 City Secretary