

AARON ROCCAFORTE <i>Council Member, Place 1</i>	DAVID RUTLEDGE <i>Mayor</i> 	PATTY COLLINS <i>Council Member, Place 4</i>
GINA MANNINO <i>Council Member, Place 2</i>		TERRI GAUTHIER <i>Mayor Pro-Tem/Council Member, Place 5</i>
BRYANT CHAMPAGNE <i>Council Member, Place 3</i>		SHERBY DIXON <i>Council Member, Place 6</i>

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF BRIDGE CITY
August 20, 2024

The City Council of Bridge City met in a meeting on Tuesday, August 20, 2024, at the City Hall of Bridge City, 260 Rachal, Bridge City, Texas.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor David Rutledge called the City Council meeting to order at 6:06 a.m.

CITY COUNCIL PRESENT:

Mayor David Rutledge
Mayor Pro-Tem Terri Gauthier
Council Member Aaron Roccaforte
Council Member Gina Mannino
Council Member Bryant Champagne
Council Member Patty Collins
Council Member Sherby Dixon

ABSENT:

CITY STAFF PRESENT:

City Attorney Paul Fukuda
City Secretary Jeanie McDowell
Chief of Police Tod McDowell
Director of Finance Katrina Jones
Director of Personnel/Purchasing Kim Tucker
Director of Public Works Mike Lund
Utility Superintendent Mike Die

2. INVOCATION

The invocation was given by Council Member Sherby Dixon.

3. PLEDGE TO THE UNITED STATES FLAG AND THE STATE OF TEXAS FLAG

Mayor Rutledge led in the pledge of allegiance to the United States flag and to the State of Texas flag. At the conclusion of the pledges, Mayor Rutledge thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

4. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Council Member Roccaforte made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Council Member Dixon.

With no changes, discussion, or alterations, Mayor Rutledge called for a vote.

MOTION CARRIED.

Ayes: Mayor Rutledge, Mayor Pro-Tem Gauthier, and Council Members Roccaforte, Mannino, Champagne, Collins, and Dixon.

Noes: None.

Absent: None.

5. PUBLIC HEARING

(a) City Council to hear and consider public comments regarding the proposed 2024-2025 Budget for the City of Bridge City, Texas

“This budget will raise more total property taxes than last year’s budget by \$158,310 or 6.36%, and of that amount \$45,233 is tax revenue to be raised from new property added to the tax roll this year.”

After reading Agenda Item 5(a), Mayor Rutledge opened the public hearing at 6:08 p.m. Mayor asked for comments on the budget.

Dana Scales Bourque – 117 Rosehurst

She said she had two comments, and she wanted to get more information before she made comments, but she was called on first to speak. She said based on the knowledge she had she heard there was a suggestion the City cut the hours at the public library due to funding. She said what she understood if the City cut the hours too much the library would lose accreditation. She said this would allow them not to be able to participate in certain funding like some possible grants and loans. She asked if it was true. Mr. Fukuda said City Council could not answer, they could only receive comments. She said if it was a true statement, just word of mouth, she would like to speak up for the public library and what good it does for the community. She said she would really hate to lose that option to be able to get more funding through the State instead of depending on area local donations and what the City gives. She said another thing over the last few years the State came through Orange County and said they had to raise the appraisal values, and they did that and the citizens sucked it up otherwise the County would lose certain funding. She said and they came through a couple of years ago and did the property as well to \$6,000 per acre and once again the citizens had no say so about that otherwise the City would lose some funding. She said she would appreciate the City keeping the city’s tax rate the same, but her heart’s desire, would be that the City would find some way to reduce that a tad, because the increase in the values. She said the citizens would already be paying more, plus the growth they are seeing especially in homes in the neighborhoods. She

said the city would still get more money, not as much, but more and it would help the citizens a little bit. She said that was her recommendation.

Herman Dupuis – 185 E. Darby

He said he has lived in Bridge City all his life and his concern is the City was cutting the hours of the library back about half to something like 20 hours a week. He said he has been using the library for about four years now after he had an accident, and he doesn't know how many other people in the Council Room use it, but there are a lot of mothers that bring their children in there to the kids room. He said they use that and there is also a bunch that comes in and uses the computers in the library. He said he feels like if Council cuts the hours back to 20 hours a week, Bridge City is not going to get a full value of what the library has to offer. He said also there is a lot of people that comes in there to send faxes. He said the staff is real helpful. He said he can't do a whole lot himself, so he has to depend on somebody to do it. He said he wanted to let the Council, and the citizens know if you cut the hours by half of what they are now there would be a lot of citizens be put at a disadvantage.

Thelma Sterling – 980 Norbert

She said she was very concerned about the library. She said she was a voracious reader, she belonged to five libraries, but the Bridge City library is incredible, the staff is incredible. She said Kelle Miller does an outstanding job and she has been very concerned about the thing happening to the library. She said a library is very important. She said she had a son and by the time he could talk he would ask her a question and she would say let's swing by the library and see what the answer to that is. She said she trained him how to use the library and she is in the Bridge City library all the time. She said everybody there knows her and knows her by name. She said Kelle Miller would say you already read that; she keeps up with everything that everybody reads. She said she doesn't even know she read it, but Kelle knows it. She said the staff at the library is just exemplary, she means they absolutely positively wonderful. She said noticed families use the library. She said Kelle has all kinds of programs for those children. She said Kelle puts a lot of work into the programs and it is not easy. She said you have parents and after they get off work they will come into the library and train their children and do research. She said she could not speak for any staff; she was talking about herself personally Kelle and her staff go above and beyond to help everyone. She said she was very upset when Kelle didn't move into Mary's position and that position was done away with and she was not the only one that was upset about it. She said the way things are going now they were all upset about it. She said there is a lot of people that use the library, and the city is investing in the children of this community. She said children need to be taught to enjoy reading and it opens up a whole new world. She said she had nothing but the upmost respect for the City's library and the staff and the helpfulness they are to this community. She said anything the City could do to help the library to stay open, they don't need to have to drive to Nederland or Port Neches and the Orange Library is nice, but it don't hold a candle to Bridge City's and we are blessed to have the library we have.

Mike Lund – 235 Quincy speaking on behalf of Mike Simpson

Mr. Simpson's concerns was cutting the hours at the library to 20 hours. He is a new participant of the library, and he enjoys the things they have to offer. He hates to see everything being cut back because he is only able to get there so many times a day. He likes the library's current hours. He asked Mr. Lund to voice his opinions, and he hates to see the hours cut back. He also had some safety concerns that Mr. Lund cleared up with him.

With no discussion, Mayor Rutledge closed the public hearing at 6:17 p.m.

6. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Thelma Sterling – 980 Norbert

She said coming into Bridge City on Texas Avenue from Port Arthur on the right hand side of the road about a quarter of the way in there is a big something like bump and she forgets its there and it scares her. She said is waiting for a tire to blow up and it is something that needs to be fixed.

Mark Williams – 795 Sudduth

He said he did not have any numbers prepared, but it looks like the City will be getting a 6.4% increase in revenue. He said he is on social security and his COLA this year would probably be 2.6% because that is all his stuff has gone up this year, groceries and things like that. He said he was wondering if he was getting a 2.6% raise, why the City is getting a 6.4% raise and of course, his Medicare premiums were going up 6.5%. He said he found that humorous. He said it seems like the City could reduce them, he knows it's a game played, they raise the value of property, they raise or lower the rate to get what they want. He said it seemed like they could keep, the City would get a \$40,000 increase, it seems like they could reduce the rate and give everybody a break, still make more money, and still have more money coming in probably more than 2,6%. He said they move the numbers of the property values and rates up and down. He said about the library if it was a money thing the City is getting a 6.4% increase in money, why it would be problem keeping the library open. He said he did not have time to figure out any numbers and he knew the city had numbers.

7. REPORTS & COMMENTS FROM:

(a) City Manager's Report

Mike Lund, Director of Public Works

1. The City put in a new well on Sunnyside and it was required by TCEQ to get lead and copper samples for the first round and staff took 40 samples and all the samples came back well below the limits. So far, the City is doing very well.
2. The water department repaired a leak a few weeks ago over on Texas Avenue, he believed some of the Council heard about it, but the City was pumping around 1.2M gallons a day for a while and did not understand it but found the leak and it cut back about 300 to 350 gallons per day, so kudos to the water department for finding that leak.
3. The drainage guys are out repairing some lines, mitigating some of the drainage the City had, and flooding issues the City had back a couple of months ago, so working on those issues.

4. City Staff began mowing the SRA canal on East Roundbunch and it looks really good.
5. As of right now the City does not have a Code or Building Inspector Official, but the City as partnered with the City of Orange, and they are helping with inspections. If you have any issues going forward reach out to Mike Lund and he and the team will get things going. He said if there were any code violations they needed to look into let him know.
6. Rotary has their bingo night on Thursday and if there was anyone who would like to volunteer to help with cards, they would be glad to have the help.

(c) City Staff

Jeanie McDowell, City Secretary

She told Council she would need the Cyber Security certificates quickly.

Tod McDowell, Chief of Police

He told Council as of yesterday the police department was up to full staff.

(d) Mayor David Rutledge report:

1. Free legal advice clinic for veterans and spouses of deceased veterans on Saturday, September 14, 2024 from 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. at the Lumberton Fire and EMS at 228 Country Lane Dr., Lumberton, TX. He said they strongly encourage you to get an appointment. He said they would have volunteer attorneys to provide free brief legal advice to all attending veterans. He said they recommended you bring any paperwork that would be relevant.
2. The Golden Triangle RSVP & Rockin' A Café presents "Together we can Serve" 6th Annual 9/11 Day of Service & Remembrance. The Golden Triangle RSVP invites all Veterans, Military Members & First Responders (retired or active) to attend a free lunch. Attendees are encouraged to wear their uniforms. It will be held Wednesday, September 11, 2024 at 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Rockin' A Cafe at 3520 West Cardinal Dr., in Beaumont.

8. RESOLUTIONS

(a) Consideration and possible action to approve Resolution No. 2024-10(R) adopting the proposed 2024-2025 Budget for the City of Bridge City, Texas

Council Member Roccaforte made a motion to approve Resolution No. 2024-10(R) adopting the proposed 2024-2025 Budget for the City of Bridge City, Texas, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Gauthier.

Mayor Rutledge said the Council would have a workshop on the hours of the library so they could look at options to set the library hours.

Council Member Champagne asked if they could add hours to the library if they decided to do that.

Kelle Miller

She said for the library to keep the accreditation they would need to be 30 hours and for them to be accredited and if the library is accredited, they would get a lot of State funding. The

Library can get discounts on the internet, computer services, and can apply for extra grants and loans. If they could maintain 30 hours, they could work with that.

Council Member Champagne asked if the City did any of that now, discounts on internet service.

Ms Miller said as from the State of her understanding when Mary retired, the City would have to have a Director of Library and when she retired, they did not replace her. She said since they did not replace her for the past year, she has kept doing what she has been doing, which is keeping the library up, so she did not apply for any grants or loans because you have to be a Director to apply for those things. She said she did apply for Wal-Mart because it is local and HEB and she received both of those grants. She said she was trying to keep the library open, in fact she proposed for the library to be opened even more like for 40 hours. She said she has a lot of people come to the library and they help a lot of people. She said she was really surprised when they suggested they be cut back to 20 hours, because they average between 50 to 75 people a day. She said about 50 a day they were having to help them in some way, shape, or form. She said if the library gets cut back to 20 hours it would really hurt the citizens more than anything. She said it would hurt them as well as their own home finances, but they could make do. In the State of Texas if the population is less than 25,000 you do not have to have a library science degree. She said the City is considered a rural library, which opens up many more doors.

Council Member Mannino asked if they could amend the budget if they decided to add hours.

Ms. Jones said they could amend the budget to add hours to the library, but they would budget it in deficit because the revenues were set.

With no further discussion, Mayor Rutledge called for a vote.

MOTION CARRIED.

Votes were orally given as follows:

Ayes:

Mayor Rutledge	Yes
Mayor Pro-Tem Gauthier	Yes
Council Member Roccaforte	Yes
Council Member Mannino	Yes
Council Member Champagne	Yes
Council Member Collins	Yes
Council Member Dixon	Yes

Noes: None.

Absent: None.

9. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE ACTION

(a) *Consideration and possible action to approve minutes of the August 6, 2024 City Council Regular Meeting*

Council Member Dixon made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 6, 2024 City Council Regular Meeting, seconded by Council Member Mannino.

With no changes, discussion, or alterations, Mayor Rutledge called for a vote.

MOTION CARRIED.

Ayes: Mayor Rutledge, Mayor Pro-Tem Gauthier, and Council Members Roccaforte, Mannino, Champagne, Collins, and Dixon.

Noes: None.

Absent: None.

(b) Consideration and possible action to approve City bills for the month of July 2024

Council Member Collins made a motion to approve the City bills for the month of July 2024, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Gauthier.

With no further discussion, Mayor Rutledge called for a vote.

MOTION CARRIED.

Ayes: Mayor Rutledge, Mayor Pro-Tem Gauthier, and Council Members Roccaforte, Mannino, Champagne, Collins, and Dixon.

Noes: None.

Absent: None.

(c) Consideration and possible action to place a proposal to adopt an ad valorem tax rate on the agenda for Tuesday, September 3, 2024, for the 2024 tax year of 0.468260 per \$100.00 valuation for the City of Bridge City, Texas (Consisting of a Debt Rate of \$0.088839 and a Maintenance and Operations rate of \$0.379421)

Mayor Pro-Tem Gauthier made a motion to place a proposal to adopt a tax rate in the amount of \$0.468260 on the agenda for Tuesday, September 3, 2024. This rate consists of a Maintenance and Operations rate of \$0.379421 and a Debt Rate of \$0.088839. This rate is a 5.23% increase over the calculated No New Revenue Rate and is the same rate as last year's rate, seconded by Council Member Roccaforte

With no further discussion, Mayor Rutledge called for a vote.

MOTION CARRIED.

Votes were orally given as follows:

Mayor Pro-Tem Gauthier	Yes
Council Member Roccaforte	Yes
Council Member Mannino	Yes
Council Member Champagne	Yes
Council Member Collins	Yes

Council Member Dixon Yes
Mayor Rutledge Yes
Noes: None.
Absent: None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

10. ADJOURN TO CLOSED EXECUTIVE SESSION

CITY COUNCIL TO GO INTO CLOSED EXECUTIVE SESSION PURSUANT TO THE PROVISION OF CHAPTER 551 OF THE TEXAS GOVERNMENT CODE FOR THE FOLLOWING SECTION:

- (a) *Section 551.071. Consultations with Attorney—discuss the status of litigation and claims involving Discovery Information Technologies***

Mayor Rutledge asked the audience to please leave the council chambers while the Council went into Closed Executive Session. He opened the executive session at 6:41 p.m. to discuss the status of litigation and claims involving Discovery Information Technologies, D&H Development LLC

- (b) *Section 551.074. Personnel Matters – deliberate the employment, evaluation, separation, supervision, discipline, and duties of the City Manager***

Mayor Rutledge asked the audience to please leave the council chambers while the Council went into Closed Executive Session. He opened the executive session at 6:41 p.m. to discuss the employment, evaluation, separation, supervision, discipline, and duties of the City Manager.

11. RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION

Mayor Rutledge reconvened the Council Meeting into open session at 7:42 p.m.

- (a) *City Council will reconvene into open session for possible discussion and/or possible action regarding Item 10(a) above.***

Council Member Collins made a motion to enter into the renegotiated contract with Discovery Information Technologies for the remainder of the current contract, seconded by Council Member Champagne.

With no further discussion, Mayor Rutledge called for a vote.

MOTION CARRIED.

Ayes: Mayor Rutledge, Mayor Pro-Tem Gauthier, and Council Members Roccaforte, Mannino, Champagne, Collins, and Dixon.

Noes: None.

Absent: None.

(b) City Council will reconvene into open session for possible discussion and/or possible action regarding Item 10(b) above.

Council Member Mannino made a motion to agree to allow the City Manager to terminate his employment agreement with the City and release the City Manager of future duties effective August 20, 2024 and agree to provide the City Manager with 60 day severance compensation, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Gauthier.

Mayor Rutledge amended the motion to allow the City Manager to terminate his employment agreement with the City and relieve the City Manager of future duties effective August 20, 2024,

With no further discussion, Mayor Rutledge called for a vote.

This motion failed from lack of second.

With no further discussion of the original motion, Mayor Rutledge called for a vote.

MOTION CARRIED.

Votes were orally given as follows:

Mayor Pro-Tem Gauthier	Yes
Council Member Roccaforte	Yes
Council Member Mannino	Yes
Council Member Champagne	Yes
Council Member Collins	Yes
Council Member Dixon	Yes
Mayor Rutledge	No

Noes: None.

Absent: None.

(c) Consideration and possible action for appointment and employment for an interim city manager

Mayor Pro-Tem Gauthier made a motion to consider and possible action to appoint Mayor David Rutledge as Interim City Manager, seconded by Council Member Mannino.

Council Member Champagne amended the motion to appoint Mayor David Rutledge as Acting City Manager with the condition he waives the manager salary, seconded by Council Member Mannino.

With no further discussion, Mayor Rutledge called for a vote.

MOTION CARRIED.

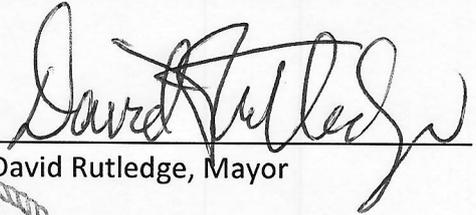
Ayes: Mayor Rutledge, Mayor Pro-Tem Gauthier, and Council Members Roccaforte, Mannino, Champagne, Collins, and Dixon.

Noes: None.

Absent: None.

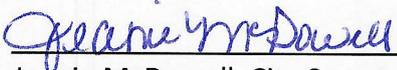
12. ADJOURN

Mayor Rutledge adjourned the meeting at 7:51 p.m.



David Rutledge, Mayor

ATTEST:



Jeanie McDowell, City Secretary

