

STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTY OF CULBERSON
TOWN OF VAN HORN

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**Special Meeting of the City Council, Town of Van Horn, Monday, January 14, 2019
City Hall, 1801 W. Broadway, Van Horn, TX.**

PRESENT:

Mayor Pam Young

Mayor Pro Tem Lyndon McDonald

Alderman Nuny Morriss

Alderman Rudy Hinojos

Alderman Ryan Martinez

Alderman Michael Garibay

City Secretary Fran Malafronte

Manager Gas Edward Torres

Asst. Chief Water Operator Jaime Hudson

City Attorney Steve Mitchell

Press: Daniel Baeza, Van Horn Advocate

Staff: None.

Visitors: Karolyne Carloss, Ocotillo Communications/Blue Origin, Eddie Seyffert, Blue Origin, David Rivera, Zap'd IT, Krissy Lerdal

INVOCATION and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Young called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm after ascertaining that a quorum was present and that the notice of meeting was posted according to the Texas Government Code Section 551 on Thursday, January 10, 2019 at 5:00 pm.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

None.

REQUEST FROM KAROLYNE CARLOSS, OCOTILLO COMMUNICATION VENTURES/BLUE ORIGIN: TO DISCUSS A COMMUNITY FACING BLUE ORIGIN INITIATIVE THAT WILL EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR VAN HORN AND BLUE ORIGIN TO COLLABORATE ON COMMUNITY PROJECTS:

Ms. Carloss addressed the Council and gave each Council member a handout detailing 3 initiatives. First, Housing, Second, Career Pipeline and Third, Business and Tourism. She also pointed out the Blue Origin and makes up 7 1/2% of the Van Horn population with approximately 150 employees. After a lengthy discussion with Council it was determined that an Independent Committee be formed to consider these initiatives and when necessary report to Council on how a collaboration with Blue Origin could benefit each party.



COMMUNITY PROPOSAL #1 HOUSING

Multi-Unit Housing Development

Blue Origin is experiencing significant growth, and employees are having a difficult time finding affordable, quality housing that meets their needs in the area. The housing environment in Van Horn drives many employees to purchase RV's and even impacts their willingness to stay in Van Horn long-term. After completing a housing survey with Blue Origin employees, we have determined that a multi-unit housing project in Van Horn would best meet the needs of employees. We know that other businesses in the area (pecan farm, sand plant, and future solar/oil/gas projects) could benefit from this type of housing initiative, and we believe that we can attract outside real estate investors and developers to this project. We are interested in getting the council's guidance on how to best integrate this type of project into Van Horn, making it accessible to mixed levels of income and preserving the integrity of the existing Van Horn landscape.

PULSE CHECK:

- Is housing an important issue for your constituents?
- Are there existing proposals or projects in work for housing development in Van Horn?

Do you have concerns or reservations about a housing project?

BRAINSTORMING QUESTIONS:

- What type of zoning issues might we encounter with a multi-unit apartment project?
- What opportunities exist to renovate an existing motel or building in Van Horn to expand local housing options?
- How can we approach this project with an eye for sustainability - focusing on the utility of this housing project, no matter which business industries are present?



COMMUNITY PROPOSAL #2 CAREER PIPELINE

Apprenticeship & Job Program

Blue Origin has identified a need for strong, local talent to help sustain and grow their operations in west Texas. Blue Origin's WTL's employee tenure length is lower than at their other sites, and we believe that training local talent has the potential to create a long-term workforce for Blue Origin, as well as stable, well-paying jobs for Van Horn students and local residents. The superintendent, Ken Daugh, is focused on developing a STEM program, and Blue Origin thinks a natural partnership can emerge between the company and the school. This partnership has the potential to expand and formalize into a career pipeline between Van Horn school, regional technical schools and universities, and Blue Origin. We are interested in jointly pursuing state and federal funding to develop apprenticeship programs, training programs, and career or college-readiness programs.

PULSE CHECK:

- Has Van Horn pursued funding for college/career readiness and job programs in the past?
- Do you think a college/career readiness program would garner your constituents' support?
- What do you perceive to be the existing career options for the workforce (including new graduates) in the area?

BRAINSTORMING QUESTIONS:

- What would a successful career pipeline look like to you?
- Do you know of existing funding that might be available to support this type of program?
 - What do you see as important career tracks for future Van Horn students that we can pursue?
- If interested, what do you think a successful partnership could look like between the school, local colleges and universities, the city, and local companies?



COMMUNITY PROPOSAL #3 BUSINESS AND TOURISM

Van Horn: Space-tourism capital of the world?

Blue Origin plans to start flying tourists to space as early as next year. We expect those flights to attract the immediate and extended families of astronauts, as well as tourists from all around the world who want to take part in this ground-breaking experience. We believe there is an opportunity for Van Horn to market itself as the space tourism capital of the world, and we think there are considerable tourist development projects that the city stands to profit from. A few initial projects we have considered is a rocket launch viewing area on State Highway 54 and a pioneering exhibit at the Clark museum to showcase Van Horn's history of land, oil, and space pioneering. We know that space tourism will attract tourists and new businesses to this area, and we want to work with the community to make sure that Van Horn is prepared to benefit from this future tourist economy.

PULSE CHECK:

What do you consider to be the existing tourist attractions in Van Horn, and what is the city doing to market these attractions?

Do you think branding Van Horn as a space tourism hub would be attractive to your constituents?

- What resources are available to aspiring business owners in Van Horn?

BRAINSTORMING QUESTIONS:

- Beyond the two tourism projects we have proposed, do you have any other initial suggestions for space tourism ventures?
- How can we make starting a business in Van Horn as frictionless as possible?
- What frameworks already exist that may help enable this vision?
- Are there future plans to enhance or expand our current hotel infrastructure to meet our growing hospitality need?

REVIEW/APPROVE QUOTES FROM VARIOUS SOURCES FOR FINAL PHASE OF LANDFILL CONSTRUCTION INCLUDING TCEQ REQUIREMENTS:

Council reviewed quotes from both Earthcon and RSB. Ald. McDonald made and Ald. Morriss seconded a motion to approve the quote from Earthcon for \$72,000.00 which includes the Engineering and Construction Oversight and the Installation of Methane Gas Probes at the Landfill. The quote for the same scope of work from RSB was for \$80,000.00. Motion carried unanimously.

REVIEW/CONSIDER EXTENDING WATER SERVICE TO FM2185 FOR ROUGHLY 240 ACRES WITH ROUGHLY 20 HOMES ON 10 ACRE SITES:

Council discussed extending the water lines outside the City Limits to FM2185 and concluded that the aging water lines inside the City Limits need to be addressed before any expansion is considered. Ald. Morriss made and Ald. Hinojos seconded a motion to deny extending the water lines outside the City Limits to FM2185. Motion carried unanimously.

REVIEW/APPROVE QUOTE TO RENT HEATERS TO CURE PAINT ON THE NEW WATER TANK, WHICH WILL SPEED UP PAINT CURE COMPLETION TIME:

Tank is already 90% cured therefore there is no need to rent the heaters.

REVIEW/DISCUSS/APPROVE REQUEST FROM TXDOT REGARDING THE RELOCATION OF OUR GAS LINES AT THE PROPOSED NEW REST AREA LOCATION:

Edward Torres, Utilities Director reported that he met with TXDOT Reps. on January 9, 2019 regarding the relocation of our gas lines. At that time he was asked of the feasibility of the City relocating these lines, incurring the labor and pipe cost and then seeking reimbursement from TXDOT. At that meeting Mr. Torres told TXDOT that the City does not have the staff or the financial means to take on this task which is estimated to cost over 2 Million Dollars.

REVIEW/APPROVE REQUEST FROM EDWARD TORRES, UTILITY DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR REGARDING THE PURCHASE OF A NET GUN TO AID IN THE CAPTURE OF ANIMALS RUNNING AT LARGE:

Ald. McDonald made and Ald. Martinez seconded a motion to approve the purchase of a Net Gun for \$999.99. Motion carried unanimously.

REVIEW/DISCUSS/APPROVE THE MAILING OF A LETTER TO TCEQ IN AUSTIN REGARDING THE PONDS AT THE GOLF COURSE:

Golf Course Ponds were put in in 1976 when the Golf Course was built. Ald. McDonald made and Ald. Morriss seconded a motion to send a letter to TCEQ in Austin explaining that the City cannot find any certification from TCEQ regarding the inspections of the ponds at the Golf Course. Since the Utility department collapsed several years ago, if there were any records they would have been in that building. Everything in the building was lost to flooding. Motion carried unanimously.

REVIEW/APPROVE QUOTE FOR SECURITY CAMERAS FOR THE UTILITY DEPARTMENT:

Ald. McDonald made and Ald. Morriss seconded a motion to approve purchasing Security Cameras for the Utility Department from Zap'd IT for \$12,565.00. Motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT:

After no further business, Mayor Young adjourned the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

ATTEST:

Pam Young
Mayor

Fran Malafronte
City Secretary