

Council Minutes May 5, 2020

STATE OF TEXAS §

COUNTY OF TARRANT §

CITY OF BEDFORD §

The City Council of the City of Bedford, Texas, met in Work Session at 5:30 p.m. via videoconference, on the 5th day of May, 2020 with the following members present:

Michael Boyter	Mayor
Tom Burnett	Councilmembers
Dan Cogan	
Ruth Culver	
Roger Fisher	
Amy Sabol	
Rusty Sartor	

constituting a quorum.

Staff present included:

Cliff Blackwell	Interim City Manager
Michael Wells	City Secretary
Wendy Hartnett	Special Events Manager
Don Henderson	Parks Superintendent
Maria Redburn	Library Director
Bill Syblon	Development Director
Brian TenEyck	Recreation Manager

WORK SESSION

The Work Session began at 5:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Boyter called the Work Session to order.

1. Discussion regarding the reopening of City facilities.

Interim City Manager Cliff Blackwell presented an overview of the City facilities closed since March 16, 2020 and asked Council's expectations on reopening those facilities. He stated staff is prepared to do a phased-in approach to reopening and that protocols need to be in place to protect the health and safety of staff prior to reopening. He asked Council on reopening the drive-thru window at the Library and presented an overview of the phased-in approach for the Library. There was discussion on sanitizing the Library, modifying the Library's schedule, setting the maximum occupancy level at a certain percentage, trigger points for reopening the Library and other City facilities, and increasing cleaning protocols. Mr. Blackwell stated waiting until June to reopen the Library will allow enough time for the proper protocols and safeguards to be put in place. Council was of the consensus to reopen the Library's drive-thru window.

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Mr. Blackwell discussed the parks being closed and stated there has been voluntary compliance for the most part. He further stated parks in neighboring cities are open; however, their playground equipment and restrooms are closed. He asked Council's expectations on keeping the playgrounds and restrooms closed, while removing the signage that says the parks are closed. There was discussion on space in parks for social distancing, removing the tables at the dog park to discourage congregating, removing tables at the other parks, and signage in the park regarding the playgrounds being closed and following CDC guidelines. Mr. Blackwell asked Council about the ballfields and tennis courts. There was discussion regarding the Governor's orders allowing tennis, but not team activities and the impracticality of sanitizing the playgrounds and bathrooms. Council was of the consensus to reopen the parks, trails, and tennis courts; to keep the playgrounds, bathrooms, and the ballfields closed; and to remove the tables at the dog park.

There was discussion regarding the Senior Center being the last facility to reopen and keeping it closed until its scheduled destruction as part of the Phase Next improvements. There was further discussion on reopening City Hall. Mr. Blackwell stated staff is able to interact with the public in a more controlled environment, including virtual Municipal Court sessions, with the City Hall buildings being closed. There was discussion on needed accommodations in Building C, the City's phone tree, and employee scheduling. Council was of the consensus for the City Hall buildings to remain closed. Mr. Blackwell stated the Old Bedford School will remain closed in line with other City facilities, and staff is preparing to transfer recreational and Senior Center programming there once it is reopened.

2. Discussion regarding summer programming, including Bedford SPLASH, the summer day camp at the Boys Ranch Activity Center, and the Summer Reading Club at the Library.

Mr. Blackwell presented an overview of the City's summer programming, including the hiring of seasonal employees for SPLASH and the summer day camp. He asked Council their thoughts on summer activities if there is no spike in COVID-19 cases, including delayed starts in July. There was discussion on closures in other communities, the financial impact of delayed starts and cancelling programs, potential health risks by opening programming, and reducing the number of attendees at the summer day camp for social distancing. There was discussion regarding the possibility of starting asbestos abatement and demolition of buildings and facilities for Phase Next earlier than scheduled and Mr. Blackwell stated he would meet with the project manager, Kelly Snook regarding that possibility. He further stated that staff is confirming whether a new pump ordered for SPLASH would work in the new facility. A majority of Council was in favor of cancelling SPLASH and the summer day camp.

Library Director Maria Redburn stated there will be a virtual edition of HEB Reads! and the Summer Reading Club and presented the parameters for the programs. She further stated the Library drive through would be open the following day.

3. Discussion regarding City festivals and events, including FourthFest and BluesFest.

Mr. Blackwell asked Council their expectations on holding City festivals and events. He stated the City cancelled the Twilight concerts for May and notified the bands, who could be rescheduled for the following year or for later in the summer. Special Events Manager Wendy Hartnett presented information on a modified FourthFest, including the band performing via Facebook Live and/or a drive-in firework show, and the costs for each option. There was discussion on the perception of holding festivals with the financial hardships faced by the City,

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including budget cuts and employee furloughs. Council was of the consensus to cancel FourthFest and the Twilight concerts until the following year.

There was discussion regarding BluesFest, including the postponement of several other outdoor events and festivals; the possibility of low attendance at BluesFest if it is held; the expenses for BluesFest; giving staff time to plan out a better festival the following year, including incorporating other genres of music; waiting to make a decision on BluesFest; and the impact to staff of cancelling events. A majority of Council was in favor of postponing BluesFest to 2021.

Councilmember Burnett stated asked that first responders not be affected by any staffing revisions as they are the first line of defense, and that the City not look to cut their staff levels.

4. Discussion regarding assistance to local businesses.

Development Director Bill Syblon presented ideas on how the City could assist in the reopening of local businesses, including a punch card program, distributing masks to the business community, signage, fees, and staying out of business's way. There was discussion regarding developing a resource page of businesses selling masks and sanitizer, as well as links to government assistance programs; a bingo card program; developing a list of businesses that are currently open at 25 percent occupancy; holding a "Shop Bedford Day" later in the year; issuing temporary certificates of occupancy to allow for increased or new patio seating for restaurants; highlighting various businesses on social media; working with the Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Foundation; leveraging what the Chamber is doing on the City's Facebook page; a Bedford-only coupon pack; incorporating business discounts in the City magazine; training businesses on using social media, and seeking input and feedback from businesses.

Mr. Syblon discussed the resources on the City's website, including the list of restaurants and what services they are providing, and a page with all the programs available to businesses.

In response to Councilmember Burnett's earlier comment, Mr. Blackwell stated he would not want to impose any kind of impact to staff but if a decision is made to cut costs, it would be across the board.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Boyter adjourned the Work Session at approximately 7:10 p.m.

Michael Boyter, Mayor

ATTEST:

Michael Wells, City Secretary