

Village of Salado
Salado Municipal Building
301 North Stagecoach Road
Salado, Texas
Minutes of Regular Meeting of Board of Aldermen
January 2, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

The Board of Aldermen meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Mayor Skip Blancett.

Mayor Blancett gave the Invocation and the Board of Aldermen led the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States and Texas flags.

Board Members Present: Mayor Skip Blancett, Mayor Pro-tem Frank Coachman, Aldermen Amber Preston Dankert, John Cole, and Michael Coggin. Alderman Rodney Bell was absent.

Salado High School Representative: Averie Piatt was absent.

Staff Present: Village Administrator Don Ferguson, City Secretary Cara McPartland, Salado Police Chief Pat Boone, and Tourism Director Chadley Hollas

1. Citizens Communications

Linda Reynolds of 507 Santa Rosa said she hoped for communication of some news on the Sanctuary development such as a possible construction start date. She said income is needed from developments off Royal Street to help fund the sewer system. She asked the Board for a cost estimate “to bury the unsightly and smelly lift stations built above ground in the Village’s Historic District.” She stated the Royal Street lift station was originally to be located on Stagecoach property, once the old wastewater treatment plant was removed. She said burying the lift stations would help Royal and Church Street businesses, which she felt would be an excellent issue for the economic development committee to work on. She said 2020 will be a great year for Salado if we all work together to improve the Historic District from FM 2268 to the Fowler House. She thanked the Board members for their service and noted inaccurate local television news coverage of the construction-related bridge closing.

2. Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of minutes of the Special Board of Aldermen meeting of December 3, 2019.
- B. Approval of November 2019 Financial Statements for the Village of Salado.

Alderman Coggin moved to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented. Alderman Cole seconded. Motion carried on a vote of 4-0.

3. Presentation

Presentation by the Bell County Tax Assessor-Collector regarding funds collected by Bell County for school crossing guard, health/nutrition, child abuse prevention/intervention, and

drug/alcohol abuse prevention programs in Salado. (*Bell County Tax Assessor-Collector Shay Luedeke*)

Bell County Tax Assessor-Collector Shay Luedeke introduced Bell County Commissioners Court Judge David Blackburn and Precinct Two Commissioner Bobby Whitson. He explained the collection and distribution of funds to local municipalities for specific purposes related to programs for school crossing guards, health/nutrition, child abuse prevention/intervention, and drug/alcohol abuse. He presented a \$2,705.30 check to Mayor Blancett, who thanked Mr. Luedeke.

4. Status Reports

A. Village Administrator's Status Report

- Wastewater Project Update

Village Administrator Ferguson reported approximately 55 percent of the properties in the initial service area are connected or are in the process of connection. He advised work continues with the Village's engineer on submission of a Certificate of Convenience and Necessity (CCN) application to the Texas Public Utilities Commission. He noted that wastewater customers can now pay deposits and monthly bills by credit cards on the Village's website payment portal, with an auto draft option to be available in the future. He said staff is gathering water usage data needed to calculate wastewater bills for the coming year.

- Gateway Signage Lighting Improvements

This report was heard after the Salado Christmas Stroll report.

Village Administrator Ferguson reported the contractor has completed installation of the new solar powered lighting systems at both sign locations, which were on during Stroll. He said there are some cell issues on the northbound sign that the contractor is working to resolve with the manufacturer that may cause intermittent shutdowns. He said the Salado Community Foundation provided the Village with a check for \$6,425 to help offset the project's total cost, which was \$13,052, coming in under the \$15,000 allocated for the project. He displayed photos of the lighted signs and spoke of long-term improvements, including wiring upgrades.

- Salado Christmas Stroll

This report was heard after the Sales and Mixed Beverage Tax Collections report.

Village Administrator Ferguson reported that Stroll was very successful this year, with good weather and well-behaved record crowds. He said plans are to close Main Street next year to enhance mobility and safety of traffic and pedestrians. He noted the Village spent a total of about \$11,000 on Stroll this year, with \$6,300 for direct marketing, \$1,100 for equipment rental, and about \$1,200 for materials such as signage, and \$2,500 for manpower costs.

- Main Street Improvement Project

This report was heard after the Wastewater Project Update.

Village Administrator Ferguson reported Main Street at Rock Creek will be closed starting January 5, 2020 for approximately 40 days. He said additional manpower will be working in multiple locations and advised caution during construction. He noted the addition of about 60 days to the projected completion date due to elevation issues with the original TxDOT project design. He stressed that this is a State project, not a Village of Salado project. He advised that the State makes decisions regarding timeframes and the Village passes on communications and works with the State to help expedite the project.

- Sales Tax and Mixed Beverage Tax Collections

Village Administrator Ferguson reported the December 2019 sales tax check, representing October collections, totaled approximately \$45,000, which is 20 percent higher than the same period last year, and the largest December check in the Village's history. The October 2019 mixed beverage tax check, representing July, August, and September 2019 collections, totaled approximately \$5,600, which is about 39 percent higher than the same period last year, and the largest October check in the Village's history. Fiscal year-to-date mixed beverage tax collections for 2019 were up 29 percent from 2018.

- Property Tax Analysis

This report was heard after the Gateway Signage Lighting Improvements report.

Village Administrator Ferguson provided current and historical information on property taxes for the Village of Salado and surrounding taxing entities. He explained Operations and Maintenance (O & M) and debt service components of the total tax rate and presented an example breakdown of a typical property tax bill by taxing entity. He noted research indicating the Village has the fifth lowest tax rate out of the 12 municipalities in Bell County; a decrease in the Village's portion of total property taxes owed (down about \$100 from 2018); debt service portion of tax attributable to voter-approved debt; and the Village's tax exemption package.

- Thomas Arnold Bridge Railing

Village Administrator Ferguson spoke of discussions with TxDOT on changing the railing design to include an "S" rather than the proposed "star" emblem. He advised that TxDOT was amenable to such a change, if the Village provides the design to TxDOT by January 20, 2020. He noted that the Village is working with local artist Troy Kelley on the "S" design.

Discussion addressed the status of the Village's General Fund; specifics of the Village's tax exemptions and impact on the Village's budget, as taxable values are reduced; tax caps enacted in the last State legislative session; possible closure of portions of Main Street during future Stroll events; Smith Branch/Royal Street development status; and complaints regarding TxDOT construction activities on Main Street.

B. Salado Police Chief Status Report

- Calls for Service
- Citizens on Patrol
- Introduction of New Officer

Police Chief Pat Boone reported on December and year-end 2019 statistics, including increased calls for service, number of reports written, citations/warnings issued, average response times, vehicle crashes, arrests, and number of house watches. He spoke on Citizens on Patrol (COP) assistance provided for Christmas Stroll and Parade and said both events went well. He introduced newly hired officer Derek Mungia, who has started field training. Mayor Blancett welcomed Officer Mungia and his family. Chief Boone thanked COP volunteers, including Alderman Cole, for their assistance during Stroll. Discussion established that the Department consists of six officers (including Chief Boone) and anticipated new vehicle delivery within the next couple of months. Mayor Blancett spoke favorably of Chief Boone's leadership and the high regard expressed for the Salado Police Department.

C. Salado Fire Chief Status Report

- Calls for Service

Fire Chief Shane Berrier was not present.

D. Tourism Director's Report

- Salado Marketing Plan Update
- Upcoming Events

Tourism Director Chadley Hollas reported on activities, including the monthly newsletter, 2020 visitor's guides, and social media advertising. He reported on positive feedback received regarding this year's Stroll events, number of trolley rides, visitor statistics, successful Sisters on the Fly event, and provided details on year-round marketing campaign, including inspirational stories of Salado. He advised of upcoming events such as Fourth Friday and Texas Stagecoach Wine Trail. Discussion addressed efforts to mitigate impact of TxDOT construction on businesses/events; trolley/golf cart traffic on the walking bridge, which remains open during construction; enhancing pedestrian/stroller mobility, particularly on the Main Street Bridge; and possible funding opportunities for improving mobility. Village Administrator Ferguson thanked Director Hollas for his assistance with Stroll this year and Mr. Hollas thanked all of the volunteers who worked to help make Stroll a success. Mayor Blancett spoke on the success of Stroll this year and trolley issues.

5. Ordinances

- Consider approval of an ordinance of the Village of Salado, Texas, ordering a General Election on May 2, 2020, for the purpose of electing a mayor and two (2) aldermen of the Village of Salado Board of Aldermen; establishing early voting locations and polling

places for the election; making other provisions for the conduct of the election; and providing for findings of fact, severability, conflicting provisions, governing law, proper notice and open meeting, and an effective date. (*Village Administrator*)

Village Administrator Ferguson reviewed key provisions of the ordinance, including polling location, voting/early voting dates/times, and subsequent resolution needed for approval of a joint election agreement among the Village of Salado, Salado ISD, and the Salado Public Library District.

Alderman Cole moved to approve the ordinance ordering a General Election on May 2, 2020, for the purpose of electing a mayor and two (2) aldermen of the Village of Salado Board of Aldermen, as presented. Alderman Dankert seconded. Motion carried on a vote of 4-0.

- B. Discuss and consider approval of an ordinance of the Village of Salado, Texas, regulating the installation of backflow prevention devices, permits and inspection fees; providing for severability; repealing conflicting ordinance and providing for findings of fact, an effective date, and proper notice and meeting. (*Village Administrator*)

Village Administrator Ferguson explained current requirements and proposed regulations that would require a permit for backflow prevention device installation, but with no permit fee required. He noted that currently permit fees are based on the value of work being done and in some cases, the permit fee can exceed the actual cost of the backflow prevention equipment being installed. He noted that plumbers will be required to provide a copy of a third-party inspection report indicating the device has been installed properly to both the Village and the Salado Water Supply Corporation.

Alderman Cole moved to approve the ordinance regulating the installation of backflow prevention devices, permits and inspection fees, as presented. Mayor Pro-tem Coachman seconded.

Discussion addressed minimal staff time necessary to enforce the ordinance and roles of Salado Water Supply Corporation and the Village of Salado in documenting permits and State-mandated inspections for backflow prevention devices.

Motion carried by a vote of 4-0.

6. Discussion and Possible Action

- A. Discuss and consider possible action regarding the allocation of funds presented to the Village of Salado by the County of Bell for school crossing guard, health-nutrition, child abuse prevention/intervention, and drug/alcohol abuse prevention programs in Salado. (*Village Administrator*)

Village Administrator Ferguson recommended allocation of the check presented to Mayor Blancett earlier in this meeting by Bell County Tax Assessor-Collector Shay Luedeke to Salado ISD for use in one of the aforementioned programs. Discussion addressed statutory procedures relating to fund allocation and reasoning for transferring the funds from the Village to Salado ISD.

Discussion established that Salado ISD has programs in place, except for the school crossing guard program, that the subject funds could be used for.

Mayor Pro-tem Coachman moved to approve allocating funds in the amount of \$2,705.30 to Salado ISD for use(s) permitted by statute. Alderman Cole seconded. In response to Alderman Dankert, Village Administrator Ferguson stated that Salado ISD can be asked to provide documentation on how the funds are used. Motion carried on a vote of 4-0.

B. Discuss and consider possible action regarding the appointment of a judge for the Salado Municipal Court for Calendar Year 2020. (*Village Administrator*)

Village Administrator Ferguson explained the current term and appointment procedure and recommended the Board conduct interviews at its next meeting, when all Board members will be present. He said there are three individuals interested in the position and suggested interviews be held during the Board meeting on January 16, 2020. He noted that the current judge's term should be extended through early February, as there is a jury trial scheduled in January.

Alderman Cole moved to proceed with interviews for the purpose of appointing a municipal court judge at the Board's January 16th meeting, and to extend the term of the current judge through February 5, 2020. Alderman Dankert seconded. Discussion clarified the interview process, including submission of interview questions to be compiled prior to the interviews, and that interviews will be held individually and not as a group. Motion carried on a vote of 4-0.

C. Discuss and consider possible action regarding the possible circulation of a petition relating to the Village of Salado, Texas (*Mayor Skip Blancett*)

This item was heard after Agenda Item 6D.

Mayor Blancett spoke of possible circulation of a petition to dissolve the government of Salado and said three aldermen have been approached by a group to inquire about their support of the rumored petition. He said dissolving the Village government would result in the loss of services such as police protection and road repairs. He said the Village would lose not just its city limits, but its extraterritorial jurisdiction, protections against unwanted types of developments, and face potential annexation attempts. He stated his purpose in speaking on this issue is not to inhibit free speech, but to caution against misinformation and the damaging effects of dissolving the Village. He conveyed comments from others on the dysfunctional image that Salado appears to have in surrounding cities. He questioned who would fix roads, purchase and operate the sewer system, and take care of Main Street, with no municipal government. Citing the high cost of purchasing real estate in Austin, Mayor Blancett said that people will continue to move here from more expensive places such as California and the Northeast, contributing to growth in our area, which is seen as far more affordable. He questioned why Saladoans are seen as always at war with each other and spoke of his responsibility to preserve the health and welfare of Salado citizens.

Discussion among the Board and Village Administrator Ferguson addressed the petition process; potential consequences of abolishing the Village's government, including payment of debt

obligations; lack of zoning/development regulations; the limited regulatory authority of counties regarding land use and managing growth; longer law enforcement response times; possible purchase of sewer system/operations by a commercial provider and associated loss of control over rates; and public education on the process and possible effects of dissolution of Salado’s municipal government.

D. Discuss and consider possible action regarding a proposed calendar relating to the development of the Fiscal Year 2021 Village of Salado Operating Budget. (*Village Administrator*)

This item was heard after Agenda Item 6B.

Village Administrator Ferguson presented the budget calendar, which begins earlier than usual due to State legislative changes affecting taxing authority of municipalities. He noted certain timeframes and that dates may be subject to change, if needed.

Alderman Dankert moved to approve the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Calendar, as presented. Alderman Cole seconded. Motion carried on a vote of 4-0.

Adjournment

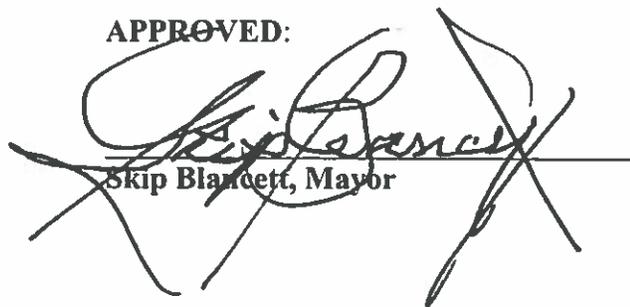
Alderman Coggin moved to adjourn. Alderman Dankert seconded. Mayor Blancett called the meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Recorded by:

Cara McPartland

These minutes approved on the 16th of January, 2020.

APPROVED:


Skip Blancett, Mayor

ATTEST:


Cara McPartland, City Secretary

