MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL ANNUAL RETREAT
CONROE CITY COUNCIL
300 W. Davis - City Hall
Emergency Operations Center – 2nd Floor

THURSDAY, JULY 18, 2019– 8:00 A.M.

CALL TO ORDER
CALL OF ROLL

PRESENT: Mayor Powell
         Mayor Pro Tem Coon
         Council Members Gibson, McDonald, Ham, and Czajkoski
         City Administrator Paul Virgadamo
         City Attorney Marcus L. Winberry
         City Secretary Soco M. Gorjon

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. by Mayor Powell.

The meeting agenda, which was posted in accordance with the Texas Government Code, Chapter 551, was presented.

Toby Powell, Mayor

ATTEST:

Soco M. Gorjon, City Secretary
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Retreat
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Mayor Powell welcomed the attendees to the annual retreat and advised Council Members on the significance of meeting in this venue in order to bring them up to speed on the many projects either underway or scheduled for the future. Mayor Powell advised that this meeting was for the express purpose of allowing department directors to present an overview of department activities and major project activities.

CITIZEN INQUIRY

Several of Conroe’s Police Officers were present to address Council and staff regarding the recent salary survey, Joshua Cunningham, Michael Moote, Raymond McCreary, E. Larry Black, Al Stainbrook, Chris Hill, Ben Mitchell, Chris Tusi, and Charles Roper but it was agreed that Jeff Nichols, President of the Conroe Police Officers’ Association (Exhibit “A”), Eddie Davis, Robert Engel, and Jessie Minchew would address Council and express their concerns and disappointment in representation of every Officer regarding the outcome of the Evergreen Salary Study. After a lengthy discussion, it was the Council’s consensus to set a meeting between the Police Association, the Fire Association, City Administrator Paul Virgadamo, and HR Director Andre Houser to discuss pending concerns regarding the salary study.

John Nicks addressed Council and asked them to consider creating a Health Department for the City that could be involved with apartment issues in the City of Conroe. Mr. Nicks also asked Council to stop wasting citizens’ money by paying lobbyist in Austin.

Councilman Duane Ham entered the meeting at 8:45 am.

Assistant Finance Director Collin Boothe gave a detailed explanation of the Capital Improvement Program and the Operating Budget Fiscal Year 2019-2020.

Staff and Council agreed in moving around some projects in order to have funding available for crucial projects and other vital priorities.

Attached to these minutes (Exhibit “B”) is a copy of the agenda posted exhibiting each item for discussion. There is a copy of the background information provided available in the Office of the City Secretary and maintained as an agenda packet. This packet will be retained within the records of the City Secretary as long as determined necessary by the adopted Records Retention Schedule.

During the entire agenda presentation, Mayor Powell and Council Members posed questions and held discussions regarding proposed projects and other concerns brought forward during this process.

There being no further business to be brought before Council at this time, there was a motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Coon and second by Councilman Gibson to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.
Gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity, I’ll try to be as brief as possible. My name is Jeff Nichols I work for the city of Conroe’s Police Department. I am the President of the Conroe Police Officers’ Association and I’m here today representing every single Police Officer who works for our Department.

Gentlemen, as you already know, our pay has been an ongoing issue with our department, and we’ve been working with you for the last seven months to address it. Our meetings with each of you individually and our one meeting with Mr. Virgadamo, have all been very positive. Those meetings caused us to be extremely optimistic that the issues we have with our salary would be resolved.

On July 12, 2019 we received a copy of final salary study by Evergreen. When we looked at the proposed new pay structure for the police department, frankly, we were very pleased. No, it was not the amount that we had asked for, but it was fair, it was a big step in the right direction, it moved our topped out officer’s, sergeants and lieutenants to a point just above average and most importantly, it demonstrated the city’s commitment to fully support our men and women who put their lives on the line every day.

Frankly, at first glance, we found ourselves grateful for the obvious effort that our city had put into addressing our concerns. In short, we experienced an instant boost in moral. I’m serious about moral. Just after receiving the email you could sense the instant change within our agency. But as I said, unfortunately, that was only at first glance. Unfortunately, looks can be deceiving. As with everything, it helps to read the fine print. Which for the first few days no one did. Sadly, I’m reporting to you today that the moral in our department has gone from as good as it gets, to the worst I’ve ever seen....in only a matter of hours.

I want to stop right here and stress to each and every one of you that we were and are completely fine, even excited, with the new salary structure. BUT, the proposed implementation of that salary structure is completely and utterly unacceptable on every level for every rank. Frankly it’s infuriating and insulting. Now, we’re not here to point fingers or assign blame to anyone. We understand that the city contracted this study out to an outside entity. As I stand here, I can tell you that we are VERY hopeful that
this is all just a very big misunderstanding. If you’ll indulge me. I’d like to explain the problem.

First, to my understanding the salaries were structured into three parts, beginning, midrange and maximum. To my understanding, no employee, no matter rank or years of service will be moved to the maximum range. We have thirty-year officers who will not be moved to the maximum range. Instead it is being proposed that officers with 7 plus years of service will be moved to, “midrange” or step 5 of the survey. Sergeants with 15 plus years of service as a Sergeant will be moved to step 2 of the survey for their respective rank. Lieutenants range from less than 1 year to seven years of service as a Lieutenant and they will all be moved to step 2 of their respective rank.

Secondly if an officer with 20 years of service started in the month of September and another officer with 7 years of service who started in the month of November will both be moved to step 5 of the proposed step plan. After the proposed salary starts the officer who has seven years of service will move to step 6 on their hire date and earn more money for approximately 10 months before the more senior officer moves to step 6. This is the instance for all ranks to my understanding.

It is common practice that each step represents the number of years of service. In other words, if you’re a three year officer, you move to step 3, if you’re a five year officer you move to step 5, if you’re an eight or more year officer you move to step 8. This is how the pay structure has been at the police department since we’ve had a step plan. That’s the purpose of the step plan.

Under our current step plan and under the proposed step plan an Officer hired today will move to the next step each year until he reaches top out. What this plan proposes to do is ignore all of the years of service for officers with over 6 years of service. **So, for example an Officer with 30 years of service would have 25 years erased.** He would be placed at the step 5 point and now has to work 3 more years to top out. I am certain you can appreciate how insulting this is.

Gentlemen, each of you told us you would like to see us in the top 5%. We are here once again asking for your help to get our salary to at least the average range, well below the top 5%. Once again, I stress. The proposed
structure is perfectly fine. We simply ask that all Officers in every rank be placed on the structure according to their current years of service.

Now, there are some other Officers who would like to speak to you about this same issue. I believe by the sheer number of Officers here; you can see for yourselves how important this is to each of us. Thank you.
NOTICE OF MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
RETREAT AGENDA

Emergency Operations Center – City Hall
300 West Davis
Conroe, TX 77301

CONVENES: Thursday, July 18, 2019 – 8:00 a.m. to Completion

THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL WILL CONTINUE UNTIL THE MEETING IS COMPLETED OR RESERVE THE RIGHT TO RECONVENE THE MEETING, IF NECESSARY, ON FRIDAY, JULY 19, 2019 AT 8:00 A.M. AT THE SAME LOCATION.

CITIZEN INQUIRIES – NOT TO EXCEED 30 MINUTES
Citizen inquiries are limited to 3 minutes per person. Preference is given to speakers addressing agenda items. Responses are limited to a recitation of existing policy or a statement of specific factual information given in response to the inquiry. Any deliberation or decision by Council shall be limited to a proposal to place the subject on the agenda of a future meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION At any time during the WORK SESSION or ACTION AGENDA the City Council may announce it will go into closed session pursuant to Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code to receive advice from legal counsel, to discuss matters of land acquisition, personnel matters or other lawful matters that are specifically related to items listed on this agenda. Prior to any such closed session the Mayor, in open session, will identify the agenda item to be discussed and the section or sections of Chapter 551 under which the closed discussion is authorized.

CALL TO ORDER
CALL OF ROLL

Convene Meeting Mayor Powell

Overview 2019 – 2020 Operating Budget Steve Williams
Overview 2019 – 2020 Capital Improvement Program/Road Projects Steve Williams

Discussion Items - This time will be utilized to present an overview of pertinent information. Mayor and Council will have an opportunity to ask questions or request follow-up information.

Wrap-Up

Adjourn

I certify that the above notice of meeting was posted on the bulletin board in City Hall, 300 West Davis, and in other places accessible to the public on July 12, 2019.

SOCO M. GORJON, CITY SECRETARY

It is the policy of the City of Conroe to afford disabled persons maximum access to all public meetings. The City of Conroe will make reasonable accommodations to address the needs of persons with vision or hearing impairments or other disabilities, including the provision of readers or sign language interpreters when requested reasonably in advance.

Exhibit “B”