



**CITY COUNCIL MINUTES
CITY OF ODESSA, TEXAS**

January 9, 2023

On January 9, 2023, a special meeting of the Odessa City Council was held at 9:00 a.m. in the Council Chambers, 5th floor, City Hall, 411 W. 8th, Odessa, Texas.

City Council present: Mayor Javier Joven; Council members: Mark Matta, District One; Steven P. Thompson, District Two; Gilbert Vasquez, District Three; Greg Connell, District Four; Chris Hanie, District Five; and Denise Swanner, At-Large.

Staff present: Agapito Bernal, Interim City Manager; Norma Aguilar-Grimaldo, City Secretary; Dan Jones, Interim City Attorney; Aaron Smith, Assistant City Manager; and other members of City staff.

A quorum being present, Mayor Joven called the meeting to order, and the following proceedings were held:

The invocation was given by Council member Hanie and followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Texas flags.

Opportunity for members of the public to address the City Council regarding the following agenda items prior to a vote being taken. Members of the public must have completed a speaker's card and presented it to the City Secretary or Deputy City Secretary prior to the start of the meeting. Pursuant to the City of Odessa Speaker's Guidelines, the speakers are limited to three (3) minutes each. Gary Dutchover stated that the last mayoral race was campaign smearing. He was concerned with the switch in dynamics and it was a circus. He stated that there was a need to work together and stop the petty comments. Michael Perrin was unhappy with recent events. He asked not act on the issues but to begin by evaluating the City Attorney and City Manager. Austin Keith supported Michael Marrero and Natasha Brooks. His interactions with them were professional. He asked to table the items for the newly elected Council members and talk with them and the department heads. He stated that the evaluations came out positive. He asked about the cost for the process with the Mayor signing the \$300,000 plus contract. Gavin Norris thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak where it was not violating rights. He stated three other lawsuits would be filed. He asked how the two new Council members could evaluate and terminate the City Manager and City Attorney. He requested not to fire Michael Marrero and Natasha Brooks. He stated that they needed to get paid. He stated you don't get rid of people because you don't like them. He thanked Council members Vasquez and Thompson. Mari Wills was thankful for the voices to be heard. She stated that there was a violation for not allowing speakers to speak. She stated that there were leaks and it was not news on the firing of Michael Marrero and Natasha Brooks. She was appalled at the new Council members. She told them to study the facts and know the obligations. She stated that there was a mass exodus with the City and in less than a year Dan Jones was to be primed for City Attorney. Gene Collins, a native Odessan, was appalled. He stated Odessa was spotlighted over the mess and was concerned with the city employees' morale. He worked with Mr. Marrero on projects in South Odessa. He stated that the community was owed a reason for termination. He stated that the City Manager or City Attorney were not a roadblock and not to come with personal agendas. Angie King thanked the Council for the willingness to serve but was concerned for the

dismissal of Michael Marrero who served at an exceptional level. She stated that there was no information to the citizens for the terminations. She asked Mayor Joven if Districts 2 and 3 matter as Council members Thompson or Vasquez had not discussed the contract or knew details of the firm. She stated that the City Manager had the professional skills and background with a heart for the community. She stated that our community faced needs including poverty, adult literacy and uninsured citizens. Tom Sprawls asked why. He stated that at an October Council meeting four appointees were evaluated. He stated that raving reviews were giving by Council member Matta for Michael Marrero and Council member Swanner for Natasha Brooks. He asked where was Mayor Joven for the two retirement of management employees. He asked what the cost will be. He stated Council members Hanie and Connell did not know the two appointees and asked them why they were terminated. Council member Swanner stated she did not give an evaluation. Savannah Morales stated that the December 13 firing, the City Manager and City Attorney were made to leave as criminals and had the interims ready. She stated that the things done were causing division in the city. She was tired with the politics. She stated Mayor Joven would not win the 2024 campaign.

To consider and take any and all possible action to evaluate and terminate the appointment of the City Attorney Natasha L. Brooks. Michael Perrin urged to table the item until a formal evaluation was made as it may prevent a horrible mistake. Mari Willis stated that Council members Connell and Hanie did not have a chance to evaluate the work and may not stand on their own. She stated that Natasha Brooks had good morale ethics and thanked Council members Vasquez and Thompson for standing up what was right. She applauded Natasha Brooks for the work done and who stood by the law. She asked Mr. Jones to stand by the law as he had an obligation to do better. She stated Natasha Brooks was a good attorney. Tom Sprawls had the same questions. He saw Mayor Joven scold Natasha Brooks for a draft document. He wanted them to think who they were following. Savannah Morales stated Natasha Brooks carried herself very well and was a fine woman.

Motion was made by Council member Swanner and seconded by Council member Connell to terminate Natasha Brooks effective immediately. Council member Thompson stated it was a travesty and believed it was done in closed doors. He didn't appreciate getting sued because of Council's actions.

The motion was approved by the following vote:

Aye: Joven, Matta, Connell, Hanie, and Swanner
Nay: Thompson, Vasquez

To consider and take any and all possible action to evaluate and terminate the appointment of the City Manager Michael Marrero. Tom Sprawls and Gene Collins had no comment. Mari Willis said it was no surprise. She stated to be careful with "any and all" language as it was not true. She stated that Michael Marrero represented the City well and probably had flaws as other people. She stated people should be treated fairly and they would be okay. She stated Michael Marrero was a good City Manager. She stated the City Manager was for the entire city. Michael Perrin had no comment. Savannah Morales wanted to know about the signing of the contract.

Motion was made by Mayor Joven and seconded by Council member Hanie to terminate Michael Marrero. Council member Thompson resented all this tremendously. He was not consulted or advised on the interim or contract. He stated that Council member Hanie was hypocritical as doesn't live of what he said. Council member Hanie stated he was a Christian

man and prayed to God. He could not believe he called him out on his Christianity.

The motion was approved by the following vote:

Aye: Joven, Matta, Connell, Hanie, and Swanner
Nay: Thompson, Vasquez

To consider and take any and all possible action to appoint an Interim City Attorney and to begin the search process for the position of the City Attorney. Tom Sprawls and Gene Collins had no comment. Mari Willis stated to consider putting in place a qualified City Manager. She stated an Assistant City Manager was hired and was not considered. She stated Agapito Bernal was not properly equipped and wished Dan Jones well. Savannah Morales had no comment.

Motion was made by Council member Matta and seconded by Council member Swanner to appoint Dan Jones to Interim City Attorney and to begin the search process for City Attorney. Council member Thompson asked for an explanation on how to start the search process. He stated that it was an illegal bad contract without an RFP and the training and search for a City Manager. Mayor Joven stated that the search was codified with the vote.

The motion was approved by the following vote:

Aye: Joven, Matta, Connell, Hanie, and Swanner
Nay: Thompson, Vasquez

To consider and take any and all possible action to appoint an Interim City Manager and to begin the search process for the position of the City Manager. Savannah Morales, Tom Sprawls Gene Collins and Michael Perrin had no comment. Mari Willis dittoed Council member Thompson's comments.

Motion was made by Council member Mayor Joven and seconded by Council member Hanie to appoint Agapito Bernal to Interim City Manager and to begin the search process for City Manager. The motion was approved by the following vote:

Aye: Joven, Matta, Connell, Hanie, and Swanner
Nay: Thompson, Vasquez

Motion was made by Council member Swanner and seconded by Council member Thompson to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved by the following vote:

Aye: Joven, Matta, Thompson, Vasquez, Connell, Hanie, and Swanner
Nay: None

The meeting adjourned at 9:58 a.m.

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

Norma Aguilar-Grimaldo, TRMC, CMC
City Secretary

Javier Joven
Mayor