

**MINUTES**  
**Irving City Council Special Meeting**  
**Saturday, August 12, 2023 at 9:00 AM**  
**City Hall, First Floor, Council Conference Room**  
**825 West Irving Boulevard, Irving, TX 75060**

The Irving City Council met in special session on August 12, 2023 at approximately 9:00 a.m. The following members were present / absent:

<b>Attendee Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Arrived</b>
Mayor Rick Stopfer	Irving City Council	Mayor	Present	
John Bloch	Irving City Council	Councilman	Present	
Brad M. LaMorgese	Irving City Council	Councilman	Present	11:00 AM
Abdul Khabeer	Irving City Council	Councilman	Present	
Phil Riddle	Irving City Council	Councilman	Present	
Mark Cronenwett	Irving City Council	Councilman	Present	
Al Zapanta	Irving City Council	Councilman	Present	
Kyle Taylor	Irving City Council	Councilman	Present	
Dennis Webb	Irving City Council	Councilman	Present	

**DISCUSSION TOPICS**

**1 Citizen Comments on Items Listed on the Agenda**

The following individuals signed up to speak at this meeting:

Roy Getting, 2208 Rita Ct., Irving, TX – Mr. Getting request no new taxes from the council.

Robert Sheaks, 1903 W. 5th Street #104, Irving, TX – Mr. Sheaks spoke about the need for homelessness initiatives.

The mayor began with a brief welcome and provided the context for the day, particularly that no action would be taken on any topic.

**2 Economic Development**

-Recent Trends

-City Focus Areas

-Retaining Corporate Tax Base

The mayor began the discussion noting that almost 70% of the tax base is commercial, which includes three main groups: businesses, hotels, and multi-family. He mentioned that the city needs to look at housing stock, both multi-family and single family. He noted that rental property has not been taken care of and residents should live in a decent place.

Regarding City Focus Areas, the mayor talked about the north-south divide, and noted that those in north often pay additional assessments (by HOAs and flood control

districts) that result in nicer amenities. He noted that there are only two recreation centers in the north and that the Council need to look at the city in its totality. He also said that the city needs to share with more residents what the city is doing such as zero-interest Texas Water Development Board bonds and improvements to recreation centers, such as Georgia Farrow and Senter.

Councilman Riddle noted that the south is frustrated because so much of the retail is ethnically oriented but that makes sense given the high Hispanic population. He stated that the City should consider purchasing property on Irving Boulevard for redevelopment. He noted that the housing stock in south Irving is much older and that there is a much higher percentage of rental property.

The Council discussed the need to increase code enforcement and other ways to clean up neighborhoods.

The Council discussed buying real estate, such as foreclosed properties, for strategic redevelopment.

Councilman Zapanta mentioned that the population make-up in Irving has completely changed; it's more multi-ethnic, especially Valley Ranch. He mentioned that major corporations are relocating further north because of better schools. Rather than a north-south divide, he sees north, central, south, east, and west, and all five areas are different.

Councilman Cronenwett believes in one city and that he looks out for all areas. He supported the investment in drainage, Heritage District, and streets. He stated that park amenities are important for residents. He noted that part of the IISD bond package failed, and that they may be at a disadvantage compared with other schools. He asked what the city could do to bolster private investment.

Councilman Bloch, noting that Councilman Riddle covered a lot on the north-south issue, focused on the clean-up of the downtown area. He was very interested in working with developers, like Lafferty, and incentivizing development and increasing housing stock. He also discussed the need to address on-street parking.

Councilman Taylor mentioned that many of the items on the agenda have been discussed in the past seven years, but there has often been no political will to address them. He said that it will take political courage to address the listed items. He suggested that they narrow the list of issues and spend some time on them. He recommended that the debt capacity and ceiling item be referred to Audit & Finance Committee. He said that the City needs to incentivize mid-level housing, not just low income housing taxing credits (LIHTC), and corporations. He also stated that the council needs to stick with decisions.

The mayor noted the need for employees. He also stated that they could set-up a fund to buy and sell real estate and to incentivize. He noted that council needs to give the city manager leeway to solve problems, and that the city manager needs direction from council. After some discussion among councilmembers, the mayor recommended the Community Services Committee review the off-street parking issue.

Councilman Webb stated that one thing that frustrates him is the lack of political will to make decisions and he used the discussion regarding sanitation as an example. He noted that council has more information than citizens when making decisions. He said that he had suggested widening streets to address off-street parking issues, which will cost money. He said that Irving is not like outlying cities that have raw land, and that council needs to do what's best for our residents. He noted that that Irving is a very diverse city and that the mindset of the city needs to change. He acknowledged that council has confused the city manager a number of times. He is also concerned about staffing for public safety.

Councilman Khabeer noted that the city is growing fast and with demographic changes with so many people moving in. Referencing the city's vision statement, he noted that some parts of the city are more beautiful than others and that council should look at all neighborhoods. He stated that parks and recreation are much needed and expressed the need for a sports complex in the city. Regarding educational opportunities, he noted that may prefer to live in Coppell ISD and wondered how the city could improve school standards and facilities and opportunities for the city to work with the school district. He also mentioned infrastructure improvements, such as streets and crosswalks.

The Council discussed the inaccurate perception of Irving ISD and the City's partnership with the Board of Trustees.

Councilman Cronenwett noted the city is investing in infrastructure which is crucial. He noted that the state hurts cities in limiting the ways they can finance facilities and that it encourages sprawl. Regarding Public Safety, he mentioned the importance of the quality of neighborhoods; if neighborhoods are safe, it reduces the need for police presence.

In response, the mayor clarified that the city does not handle school districts and that the city can only support. He noted that there are a lot of educational opportunities in Irving and while he would like to assist them financially, that was not the city's role. The city helps with SRO's. He also noted Singley Academy is No. 1 in the state for what they do. The mayor reinforced that the city should stay focused on municipal issues.

Councilman Webb state that in regard to affordable housing the city should acquire, redo and create affordable and senior housing and that affordable and senior housing will not happen without additional multi-family.

Councilman Khabeer stated that the city should not have any issue with getting dollars from the state and federal governments. He asked how the city could continue to provide a high quality of life and acknowledged the need for recreation centers and a sports complex. He also mentioned good retails stores, like Whole Foods, and wondered about other opportunities, such as HEB and Costco.

The mayor mentioned the challenges of some redevelopment which the city does not own or control, such as Plymouth Park and Irving Mall. He noted that in south Irving multifamily properties are charging more than \$1,400 for rents and in Valley Ranch single family landlords are getting more than \$3,500. The mayor noted that there are

more job opportunities in Las Colinas than Dallas. Regarding homelessness, the mayor noted that Dallas is committing dollars to address it.

Council discussed the need to assist the homeless, various non-profit organizations that the city can partner with, and the issues renters face when apartments refuse to take 3rd party checks. They also discussed the need to address mental health issues when assisting the homeless.

Council recessed at approximately 10:50 a.m.

Councilman Zapanta left the meeting and returned at 12:10 p.m.

Council reconvened at approximately 11:12 a.m.

Councilman Khabeer asked two questions: (1) the impact of the state raising the homestead exemption from \$40K to \$100K and (2) the legal definition of panhandling versus solicitation.

City Manager Chris Hillman responded to the first question confirming that it would have little impact on the city but noted there were other changes to state law that may impact the City.

City Attorney Kuruvilla Oommen described the difference between panhandling and solicitation and noted that solicitation is much broader encompassing begging, selling wares and goods, aggressive solicitation, and solicitation from door-to-door. He further noted that the ordinance will be brought forward for council consideration soon.

Council discussed the public safety considerations for solicitations and panhandling.

Councilman LaMorgese arrived and the mayor called on him to get his goals. He mentioned that the city should be extremely competitive on public safety funding. He said that the city should prioritize top tier priorities; stating that the City should protect our power stations and grid; focus on disaster planning; maintain our Aaa bond rating; focus on redevelopment; modernize the city; and work on the speed of completing things. He mentioned that he would like to bring the library more in line with what the state is doing. He was willing to assist with the review of the Ethics Policy, and noted that in the Urban Center, and PUD#6, and the former Exxon property should have a master plan and stick with it.

Regarding redevelopment, Councilman Taylor asked if there was a process of buying properties.

City Manager Hillman stated that from an economic development and land use perspective, it is strategic to own property but doesn't want to be landlords. He mentioned that he will be recommending setting aside dollars for strategic purposes.

Council and staff discussed the process to purchase property and what properties the City should focus on.

The mayor specifically turned to agenda item number 2. He mentioned the new economic development strategic plan, identifying opportunities from the south to the north, especially vacant buildings. He requested an inventory and conditions of what city owned properties (buildings that are and are not utilized). He also wanted an inventory of vacant land (with zoning and knowing what could be built). Regarding retention of corporate tax base, he stated, that its the first time under its under 70%.

### **3 Land Use and Housing Plan**

The mayor provided background on the moratorium on multi-family housing approved in the 1990's; noting the negative impact on the water, sewer, and street infrastructure when the density grows beyond what was planned.

### **4 Development & Redevelopment Opportunities**

-PUD 6

-Former Exxon Property

The mayor mentioned that PUD 6 is ripe for development, as is the former Exxon property.

Councilman Webb noted that the City only owns 80 acres in PUD 6 so it will need to work with other property owners.

The mayor noted that the city has a good relationship with University of Dallas and Village Walk but that it might be a good idea to get everyone back together.

Councilman Zapanta noted the need to engage with flood control district and the need for a master plan for the former Exxon property.

The City Manager responded that the city already has a master plan for PUD 6 but there's no master plan for former Exxon property.

Councilman Webb said it was a good idea to revisit PUD 6 and bring it back to P&D.

The mayor requested an update regarding TIFS (revenues & commitments). He mentioned that city should also look at other real estate in the area, particularly ATT property which may become vacant. He mentioned that the city should be in close contact with landowners.

### **5 City Construction Project Time Frames**

The mayor mentioned that the city may need to incentivize utility providers to keep projects on time.

The Council discussed various TxDOT road projects on Loop 12, SH 114, SH183, and SH 635 as well as City projects that are being delayed by other entities.

## **6 Road & Infrastructure Projects**

- Esters Road Reconstruction
- Expanding and Connecting Luna Road at Royal to Tom Braniff and 114
- Hunter Ferrell Road Improvements
- State Highway Landscaping

The mayor recommended doing an update on these items.

Councilman Zapanta mentioned that there will be lots of dollars that will flow for transportation projects.

Councilman Khabeer noted the project funding for Esters Road - \$5 million approved but \$8 million awaiting authorization.

The mayor mentioned that all roads have been prioritized and asked if city should bring back consultant to reevaluate roads. Also, three of our major projects will be done by the end of the year.

Councilman LaMorgese stated that per Assistant City Manager Orlando Sanchez they will going back out to reevaluate roads.

Councilman Taylor and the mayor noted that often projects involve under the road improvements first, like water and sewer, then reconstruction of the road.

## **7 Public Safety**

- Budget & Staffing Levels
- Retention
- Succession Planning
- Equipment

The Mayor mentioned that the city will set aside dollars for personnel and discussed how the City's staffing level compare to other cities.

Councilman LaMorgese mentioned the focus on equipment and looking at salaries including eliminating steps for firefighters.

## **8 Personnel Challenges**

- Competitive Salaries
- Employee Morale
- Staffing Retention & Recruitment

The Mayor noted that the employee survey is ongoing.

Council and staff discussed how the new law requiring schools to have security will impact the School Resource Officers (SRO) program the City has the school districts.

Councilman Zapanta inquired about security at Coppell ISD and CFBISD.

The city Manager confirmed that those districts provide their own security.

## **9 Enhanced Customer Service & Alignment with City Leadership**

The Mayor discussed how the city gets information out and whether residents read it. He said the City need new ideas and thoughts on how to get information out.

Councilman Khabeer acknowledged the work of the Irving Ambassadors.

Councilman LaMorgese noted that regarding communications, it's important to get out in front of it. He mentioned expedited project delivery. He also mentioned being on the same page regarding libraries, solicitation and defining where the City is on housing. He lastly mentioned that reviews for direct reports should be stand alone to provide a longer timeframe and to ensure alignment on all topics.

Councilman Bloch mentioned the need for enhanced customer service. He provided the example of the Planning Department providing incorrect information. He also mentioned that residents don't hear enough about what the city is doing.

Councilman LaMorgese stated that the City's Twitter is quite good. He recommended a clearing house for communications. He requested more assistance with communications, especially if someone says, "Call me." He would love to see a newsletter or Podcast on important topics with directors or councilmembers.

The mayor mentioned current process for reviewing emails and for follow-up with City Secretary.

## **10 City Debt Capacity & Ceiling**

The mayor mentioned that this item will come to Audit & Finance Committee.

## **11 Code Enforcement**

Councilman Webb inquired about high weeds and notice requirements.

The city manager indicated he will follow up with Code Enforcement staff.

## **12 On-Street Parking**

The mayor mentioned this item has already been discussed above.

## **13 Homelessness Initiatives**

The mayor mentioned this item has already been discussed above.

**14 Park Development on DFW Property Along SH 161**

The mayor mentioned this item has already been discussed above.

The city manager stated that DFW may be willing to sell top 40 acres, but still awaiting a response from DFW.

**15 Development of Recreation Centers**

The mayor mentioned this item has already been discussed above.

**16 Libraries**

-District 5 Branch

-Collection Development Policy

-Request for Reconsideration Policy

-Curated Children's Section

Councilman LaMorgese mentioned the desire to follow the State's new policy for children's libraries and continued review of policies, particularly regarding collection development.

Councilman Cronenwett made comment regarding collections and adherence to ALA policies. He noted the need in District 5 for a recreation center and library.

Councilman Zapanta suggested a mobile or small library with a Hispanic bilingual focus.

Councilman Taylor inquired about master plan for governing PUD 6 along with police, library, etc.

The City Manager responded to his inquiry about how those issues are considered.

The Mayor mentioned that the city needs to consider what type of development occurs – commercial versus residential – and look at underserved areas for library placement. He also stated that the city needs to be more strategic and take care of what it already has.

Councilman LaMorgese inquired whether the city was purchasing entire DART property for Station 8, as he felt that might be a good location for a library. The City Manager confirmed it was only a portion. He also asked when was the last time the city built so many fire stations.

Councilman Riddle responded that it was in the 1980s.

Councilman LaMorgese mentioned that the library policies were delinked from ALA, that publishers were driving certain types of books, and removing books is difficult.



Councilman Cronenwett asked when was the PUD 6 master plan done? The City Manager responded that it had been done seven years ago and they would bring it back to the Planning & Development Committee for review.

Councilman Webb inquired whether the reconsideration process would be reevaluated given the optics of the Library Director being the final appeal.

**17 High Performing Charter Schools**

Councilman Cronenwett mentioned that he spearheaded effort to bring a charter school to Irving and there are others that are interested in coming. He said that he was looking for assistance with crosswalks to make it safer.

**18 Solicitation Ordinance**

The City Attorney stated that the ordinance will be presented to the council soon.

**19 City of Irving Ethics Code Review**

Councilman Webb noted that the current policy doesn't have any teeth.

Councilman Zapanta said he wanted to focus on the definition of lobbyists and review campaign contribution limits (maybe they should all be the same).

**20 HB 2127**

This item was briefly discussed at the beginning of the meeting.

Council adjourned the meeting for the day at approximately 2:09 p.m.

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Richard H. Stopfer, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Shanae Jennings, TRMC  
City Secretary/Chief Compliance Officer