



# CITY OF JAMAICA BEACH

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## CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

**September 14, 2023  
6:00 P.M.**

### **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS:**

*Mayor Sharon Bower called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm*

*The following Council Members were present:*

*Mayor Sharon Bower  
Mayor Pro Tem Gil Madray  
Alderswoman Lorraine Jones  
Alderman David Welch  
Alderman Russell Rupertus  
Alderman Sherwood Green*

*The following staff were present:*

*Director of Operations – Robert Quintero  
Police Chief – Raymond Garivey  
Finance Clerk - Ester Abrego  
Water Clerk – Tina Sifuentes*

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE U.S. AND TEXAS FLAGS**

**SPECIAL PRESENTATION:** None

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

- **Paul Wendt:** Requests all public speakers approach the podium for them to be seen on camera and to be heard clearly.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Mayor Sharon Bower stated WGIPOA will have a meeting on Saturday, September 16 at the Galveston Country Club. The guest speaker will discuss dune programs and protections measures. The CERT meeting is Friday, September 15 at 6:30 pm.

### **REPORTS FROM DIRECTORS, POLICE, AND FIRE:**

- Chief of Police, Garivey - Report attached – No questions were asked.
- Director of Operations, Quintero – No report
- Fire Chief, Baden - No report

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Mayor Sharon Bower presented the minutes for August 24

*Motion made by Alderman Welch to **approve**, seconded by Alderwoman Jones*

**VOTE**

**5 AYES (Green, Rupertus, Welch, Jones, Madray)**

**0 NAYS**

**0 ABSTAIN**

**MOTION PASSED**

## **ALDERMAN REPORTS:**

**Mayor Pro Tem Madray:** No report.

**Alderman Green:** Received a letter from the state park that they will conduct a control burn in between October 2023 to April 2024, based on weather conditions. Target is November 2023 or January 2024. Stated that one of his neighbors was cut by one of the mailboxes.

**Alderwoman Jones:** I want to thank our Chief of Police, Garivey, for keeping his promise and providing a Citizens Police Academy. Lt Mark Posey, Corporal Matthew Seurattan, and Officer Chris Nolan made it fun and educational. Our first of 5 meetings was on traffic stops. They provided a PowerPoint presentation, YouTube videos that showed funny traffic stops, and videos that showed why traffic stops are so dangerous for our police officers. We even had a little written test. Then they took our group outside to experience a traffic stop. They explained what they do to keep citizens safe during a traffic stop and what they do to keep themselves safe during that stop. It was a terrific class. We had 9 citizens attend the first class. We all left with learning a lot and with a deeper respect for our Police Officers. I think we all look forward to next week. The first Day for the CERT Class - Community Emergency Response Team begins tomorrow at 6:30 pm at City Hall. WGIPOA is this Saturday at 9 a.m. at Galveston Country Club. Guest speaker is Lt Colonel Ian O'Sullivan, Deputy Commander of the Galveston US Army Corp of Engineers for the Mega Projects. The Pooch Pool Day was a success. This was our pool manager's idea. Everyone I talked to would like to do this next year too. I contacted Congressman Randy Weber's office about our USPS drop-off box. It has been vandalized and it's been mended over so many times with duct tape to cover up the rust that it needs to be replaced. Randy Weber is working with the USPS about the thefts in Galveston. His office was very helpful. I filled out the required form and will follow up with that. At the County Mayor Alderman meeting last night, I talked to many about our Stars for Troops program and explained that they could do this too. I shared our stars with them and gave them a challenge to join Stars for Troops. I am hopeful that they will. Last, I want to report that further out west on the island and not in Jamaica Beach there was a shooting at an STR. The paper reported that there were 2 killed and 3 taken with injuries to UTMB. This was a large party with 50 people at the STR. The owner stated they were unaware of the large party. I bring this up because we need to begin discussions with the community to keep everyone safe including our police officers and our visitors. We certainly do not EVER want this to happen in our city. Thank you, Mayor.

**Alderman Rupertus:** No report.

**Alderman Welch:** Halloween at the park at on October 28<sup>th</sup>, combined with National Night Out

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### **1. PUBLIC HEARING ON THE CITY OF JAMAICA BEACH FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024 PROPOSED BUDGET. (Bower)**

*Public hearing opened at 6:09 pm*

*Public hearing closed at 6:21 pm*

Mayor Sharon Bower opened comments from the public. Ginger Jones inquired about adoptive property tax rate and the preceding year's tax rate; it appears the rate is going down. Mayor Bower stated that the voter approved tax rate allows municipalities to raise their combined overall revenue by 3.5 percent each year. If a higher rate is proposed, it must be voted in at an election. Because the appraised values went up, the tax rate went down. **Last year's rate was 0.00000 and this year's rate is 0.139594**, which means on each \$100,000 of appraised value, citizens will pay \$26 less than last year. For those not claiming homestead, your taxes will increase five or six percent. For those who claim homestead, per GCAD, the

tax appraiser calculations on \$450,000, you will receive \$20 off your taxes. Cheryl Johnson has been a great help. Paul Wendt inquired about the revenue coming into the city, questioned if the revenue was for the water problems. Mayor Bower stated there are many issues with the water infrastructure and the expenditures are necessary for upgrades that have been postponed. Mr. Wendt wanted clarification that the new expenditure was not to hire a new City Administrator, and that the tax rate would not be raised specifically to hire a new City Administrator. Mayor Bower stated she would raise the taxes in order to run the city efficiently to keep the city in compliance. Mr. Wendt stated a 3-million-dollar budget seems high for such a small city and believes the city could cut back on spending. He stated that the rates will most likely go up next year and currently do not have a break for citizens 65+. Mayor Bower stated we do have a tax freeze for citizens 65+. Alderman Welch stated that the city is not exempt from inflation, so that the rate is fair to keep the city running. Alderman Green stated that the water rates will be raised to cover the cost the city requires to provide water with not additional revenue, though we should try to raise it to use the money for issues that may arise. Mayor Bower stated that a discussion to raise water rates will be at the first meeting in October. Kyle Vardeman stated that state government can claim they give the biggest tax cut in history but it's not because the counties and the appraisal districts will continue to raise the rates. Looking at the budget lines items, he realizes there are water issues, but the price of the fence or hiring a city administrator takes away from everyone. He encourages the city to review the line-item expenses.

*Motion made by Alderman Welch to **adopt**, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Madray*

**VOTE**

**1 AYES (Green, Rupertus, Jones, Madray, Welch)**

**0 NAYS**

**0 ABSTAIN**

**MOTION PASSED**

**2. PUBLIC HEARING ON THE CITY OF JAMAICA BEACH PROPOSED AD VALOREM TAX RATE FOR TAX YEAR 2023. (Bower)**

*Public hearing opened at 6:23 pm*

*Public hearing closed at 6:23 pm*

Mayor Bower opened comments from the public. There were no comments or questions.

*Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Madray to **adopt**, seconded by Alderman Welch*

**VOTE**

**5 AYES (Green, Jones, Madray, Rupertus, Welch)**

**0 NAYS**

**0 ABSTAIN**

**MOTION PASSED**

**3. DISCUSSION/ACTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 2023-09, ESTABLISHING GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT IN THE CITY OF JAMAICA BEACH, TX. (Bower)**

Mayor Bower stated that this resolution is for volunteers. Alderman Green stated that he reviewed the liability waiver for the City of Houston, and that the attached waiver is word for word and appears to be well figured out. Alderman Rupertus stated volunteerism is great but with the city's day to day operations and activities, he's worried about exposing the city to liable or lawsuit actions, with untrained citizens having access to personal documents and public information. The duties of an alderman or alderwoman is to reduce and limit the liability of the city and keep it out of lawsuits. In the recent past, the city was in a substantial lawsuit due to the mishandling of documentation that the city had to settle. Questioned if the risk is worth the reward for the volunteers. Mayor Pro Tem Madray believes the risk is worth the reward because the waiver of liability has the city covered. Alderman Rupertus stated the waiver on covers the individual, and Alderwoman Jones pointed out that further into the waiver, the volunteer is releasing waiver of liability for the City of Jamaica Beach. Alderman Rupertus asked for explanation if an individual acts poorly and there is a lawsuit, would this null it, being that the individual, nor the city are responsible. Mayor Bower stated the city is

ultimately responsible for all employee's and council members, but the protection comes from the waiver stating that the volunteer recognizes this is private information and that they have constraints in guidelines in place that they can't violate or then they are equally responsible for their poor actions. Alderwoman Jones stated that the employees will be the only ones who will have access to personal information. Mayor Bower stated that unless a check is brought in, the staff will not have access to payment information on any platform. Alderman Rupertus stated that there will be a city council liaison, but what do they know about the day in day out activities. He does not know how to do Tina's job or Ester's job, so how will they liaison the extra workload. He believes this will fall on the staff. Mayor Bower stated the liaison will give the staff an avenue to discuss whether the volunteer is helpful or not, and the liaison can help relay that. Alderman Rupertus stated that the last time he spoke with staff, they were not comfortable with this and asked if they changed their minds. Mayor Bower stated that there have been many conversations about volunteering, if they feel comfortable, how they discuss if this is or is not working for them. Alderman Welch questioned if the staff is going to be able to pick the liaison because he believes that staff should be able to choose the person they are comfortable with. Mayor Bower stated that the staff will have the option to choose.

*Motion made by Alderwoman Jones to **discuss**, seconded by Alderman Welch*

*Motion made by Alderwoman Jones to **approve**, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Madray*

**VOTE**

**4 AYES (Green, Jones, Madray, Welch)**

**1 NAYS (Rupertus)**

**0 ABSTAIN**

**MOTION PASSED**

**4. DISCUSSION/ACTION TO APPROVE ORDINANCE NO. 2023-07, PROVIDING FOR SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL SERVICE IN THE CITY OF JAMAICA BEACH, TX. (Bower)**

Mayor Bower stated that the rate will increase to \$15.00. The biggest changes are the 4 containers for pick-up, 64-gallon container, and no visible white bags. White bags need to be in a trash container with a lid. Mayor Pro Tem Madray stated that there is a 50-pound limit. Alderman Rupertus stated he sees there will be fees for non-compliance and would like to know who is enforcing this? Will it be the police department? Mayor Bower stated it will be the police department.

*Motion made by Alderwoman Jones to **discuss**, seconded by Alderman Welch*

*Motion made by Alderwoman Jones to **approve**, seconded by Alderman Welch*

**VOTE**

**5 AYES (Green, Jones, Madray, Rupertus, Welch)**

**0 NAYS**

**0 ABSTAIN**

**MOTION PASSED**

**5. DISCUSSION/ACTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 2023-10, APPROVAL TO CLOSE THE CITY'S COVID CHECKING ACCOUNT AND TRANSFER ALL AVAILABLE FUNDS TO ESTABLISH A COVID MONEY MARKET ACCOUNT. (Bower)**

Mayor Bower stated that there is \$200,000 in COVID funds received, and while we are looking for ways to use the money, we can at least earn interest off the funds. Currently the funds are not earning any interest and the money market account will earn 4.354 percent interest. There are 6 transactions The biggest changes are the 4 containers for pick-up, 64-gallon container, and no visible white bags. White bags need to be in a trash container with a lid. Mayor Pro Tem Madray stated that there is a 50-pound limit. Alderman Rupertus stated he sees there will be fees for non-compliance and would like to know who is enforcing this? Will it be the police department? Mayor Bower stated it will be the police department.

*Motion made by Alderman Rupertus to **discuss**, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Madray*

*Motion made by Alderwoman xxx to **approve**, seconded by Alderman xxx*

**VOTE**

**5 AYES (Green, Jones, Madray, Rupertus, Welch)**

**0 NAYS**

**0 ABSTAIN  
MOTION PASSED**

**6. DISCUSSION/ACTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 2023-11, EXTEND THE MATURITY PERIOD OF TWO CERTIFICATES OF DEPOSITS. (Bower)**

Mayor Bower stated that the rate will increase to \$15.00. The biggest changes are the 4 containers for pick-up, 64-gallon container, and no visible white bags. White bags need to be in a trash container with a lid. Mayor Pro Tem Madray stated that there is a 50-pound limit. Alderman Rupertus stated he sees there will be fees for non-compliance and would like to know who is enforcing this? Will it be the police department? Mayor Bower stated it will be the police department.

*Motion made by Alderwoman Jones to **discuss**, seconded by Alderman Welch*

*Motion made by Alderwoman Jones to **approve**, seconded by Alderman Welch*

**VOTE**

**5 AYES (Green, Jones, Madray, Rupertus, Welch)**

**0 NAYS**

**0 ABSTAIN**

**MOTION PASSED**

**MAYOR'S REPORT:**

Mayor Sharon Bower would.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

**TAKE POSSIBLE ACTION OR GIVE DIRECTION ON EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEMS OF DISCUSSION:**

Discussion/Action to authorize the mayor to enter into a contract with Coastal Technology Services to analyze the Cities Cyber security to not exceed \$20,000.

**No vote was required**

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Madray to adjourn, seconded by Alderman Welch. Meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m.