

MINUTES
For the Special Meeting of Mayor and Council
City of Zachary, LA
Council Chambers, 4700 Main Street
Wednesday, July 15, 2015, 6:30 p.m.

A. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Amrhein called the special meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., on Wednesday July 15, 2015 at the Zachary City Hall located at 4700 Main Street, Zachary, LA.

B. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Invocation by Councilman Womack

Pledge of Allegiance by Councilwoman O'Brien

C. OPENING PROCEDURES

1. ROLL CALL

MAYOR

David Amrhein

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Francis Nezianya – District 1

Brandon Noel – District 2

Laura O'Brien – District 3

Ben Cavin – District 4

Tommy Womack – District 5

ABSENT:

2. READING OF CITY POLICY RELATIVE TO OPEN MEETINGS

Before proceeding with the meeting, Mayor Amrhein read a statement into the record regarding the Open Meetings Law, and citizens' right to participate in public meetings. The statement set forth general rules of conduct of the public meeting and outlined the process through which a citizen can have items placed on the Council agenda. A copy of the rules is available at City Hall, Mayor's Office or by calling the Clerk of the City Council. The rules will also be available at every Council meeting.

I. Public Hearing to consider levying additional or increased millage rates without further voter approval or adopting the adjusted millage rates after reassessment and rolling forward to rates not to exceed the prior year's maximum.

Mayor Amrhein declared the PUBLIC HEARING opened at 7:15 pm.

Mayor Amrhein opened the meeting and referred the public to a handout that included all the breakdown of the annual property taxes that citizens of Zachary pay each year. He explained that the City of Zachary collects approximately five hundred thousand dollars a year from the annual millage tax each year. He continued to say that the City of Zachary has grown but the millage tax has not gone up. There have been significant budget cuts which include department heads managing more than one department, not rehiring staff when someone leaves, and hiring a

full time city attorney instead of contracting the work on an as need basis. He also explains that as our city boundaries continue to expand east and west our Fire District also expands. The city will need to look into increasing the number of fire stations as well.

Councilman Noel explained that the reason for this discussion is to continue to watch the budget and the millage tax. He explained that as reoccurring expenses increase the gap is starting to close. He adds that as this trend continues the gap will close. He explained that these are things that we want to do and need to do.

Diane Westmoreland, 7158 Pride Port Hudson, Zachary, La. was present to speak against the millage tax increase. Ms. Westmoreland explained that the way to increase revenue is to bring more businesses into the City of Zachary. She says that this increase should have been looked into two years ago. She explained that as a large property owner it will hurt her because she is on a fixed income. She feels that there is another way to increase revenue without going up on property owners. Ms. Westmoreland explained that if a sales tax would pass it would be more fair because everybody would have to pay the tax not just property owners.

Gwen Stevens, 5213 Newell Street, Zachary, La was present to speak against the millage tax. She began by asking the council if it was cheaper to hire an attorney and the council answers yes. Ms. Stevens also asked if the City of Zachary gets a tax from Walmart Pharmacy and the council answered yes. Ms. Stevens' next question was about the salary that is offered to the laborer at the Zachary Ball Park. Mayor Amrhein explained to Ms. Stevens that Brec does not maintain the baseball and softball fields at the park. He said that this is a City of Zachary owned park and it generates about 1 million dollars in revenue a year. Ms. Stevens asked Mayor Amrhein was the salary for the laborer starting at thirty five thousand dollars and he answered yes. He explained that the salary included working longer hours with no overtime and this person was not protected and is replacing someone that left. He will be helping to maintain a 33 acre park.

Councilman Cavin opened his remarks with saying that the reason we are here is to look at what this would do. He explained that he sees a lot of nasty stuff on social media and emails but does not get many calls. He encouraged everyone to always call or email their councilman with any concerns or questions they may have. Councilman Cavin went on to say that the City of Zachary has the second lowest property tax in the state. With the aging water, gas, and sewer lines we are going to have to look into this and plan ahead.

Councilman Neziyanya thanked everyone for coming. He added that no one likes to talk about taxes but at some point we have to increase our revenue to be able to maintain the things we need. Councilman Neziyanya explained that every year the council looks at the budget and every year the council trims it down because of money issues. Mayor Amrhein explains just how old all of the buildings are and how much Zachary has grown in the last 32 years.

Monique Smith, 4642 Virginia Street, Zachary, La, was present to speak against the increased millage rate. She spoke on how raising the tax would be hard on all small businesses especially the ones that own their building. Ms. Smith explained that she pays taxes on her residence and then she has to pay property taxes on her building.

Steve Pike, 20650 MacHost Road, Zachary, La was present to speak against the millage tax. He explained that we pay high taxes in the city. Mr. Pike would like to see bike trails constructed. Mr. Pike would like to see better quality with the money.

Chief Danny Kimble, Zachary Fire Department, explained the most expensive property tax in Zachary only pays \$265.00 a year to the City of Zachary. He said that the amount of property tax citizens pay to the City of Zachary is not a lot compared to the services that they

receive.

Councilwoman O'Brien explained that the citizens really do not understand the millage tax and hopes to hold forums to educate everyone. Councilwoman O'Brien explains that if we are not able to add more fire stations to get more coverage then our homeowners insurance will go up. She added that it is important to increase the revenue and that it needs to be more balanced. Being that she and Councilman Cavin are new to the council they do not feel they are comfortable raising taxes at this time. Mayor Amrhein explained that he would rather see sales tax raised and not property tax. The Mayor and Council thanked the public for attending.

Mayor Amrhein declared the PUBLIC HEARING closed at 7:24 pm.

Linda Banks, 2895 McHugh Road, Zachary, explained that when the city puts the ads in the paper for the forums and any information on the millage to please explain it so that people will understand what is going on.

The motion was made by Councilman Cavin

The motion was seconded by Councilwoman O'Brien

To Adjourn the Public Hearing

YEAS: Nezianya, Noel, O'Brien, Cavin, Womack

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

ABSTAINED: None

Mayor Amrhein declared the PUBLIC HEARING opened at 7:29 pm.

II. Public Meeting as follows.

1. Consider an Ordinance to adopt the adjusted millage rate (s) for 2015.

The motion was made by Councilman Cavin

The motion was seconded by Councilman Noel

To keep the annual millage rate for 2015 as 3.17, and to amend Ordinance #2015-03 to reflect the adjusted millage rate for 2015 to 3.17 and calling for its final adoption.

YEAS: Nezianya, Noel, O'Brien, Cavin, Womack

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

ABSTAINED: None

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.

CERTIFICATION

Dana Poole, Clerk of City Council
CITY OF ZACHARY
PARISH OF EAST BATON ROUGE
STATE OF LOUISIANA

David Amrhein, Mayor

I, Dana Poole, do hereby certify that I am the duly appointed and acting Clerk of the City Council for the City of Zachary, Parish of East Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

I further certify that the above and foregoing is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the regular meeting of the Mayor and Council of the City of Zachary, Louisiana, held on Wednesday, July 15, 2015, a proper quorum being there and then present.

Dana Poole, Clerk of City Council