

CITY OF BLUE RIDGE
CITY COUNCIL MINUTES
OCTOBER 12, 2022

THE BLUE RIDGE CITY COUNCIL MET IN SPECIAL SESSION AT 6:45 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2022, AT THE BLUE RIDGE COMMUNITY CENTER, LOCATED AT 200 W. TILTON, BLUE RIDGE, TEXAS 75424 AT 7:00 P.M. WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR ACTION.

1. Mayor Rhonda Williams called the meeting to order at 6:45pm and called roll with the following members present: Rhonda Williams, Christina Porath, Colby Collinsworth, Keith Chitwood, and Tammy Crosswhite. Mayela Perales was not present at roll call but arrived at 6:50pm.

2. Prayer and Pledges of Allegiance

Eddie Sims offered the prayer and lead the Pledge of Allegiance to the American and Texas Flags.

3. Public Comment

Tonya Harrison, residing at 9969 FM 545, came before the public with the following: "I want to give the history of why this ordinance was created, since some of you didn't live in Blue Ridge at that time. Ordinance 112613 was created by the attorney, Mayor and City Secretary in November of 2013. At that time you had sitting Council members from each board, 2-4B and 1-4A. They were constantly bickering and nothing was being handled on the City or board sides. They would approve expenditures on their individual boards and bring it to Council and the one side would vote against what the other side was attempting to do and vice versa. For 2 years this went on and while that was going on there were businesses waiting for funds to be dispersed to them. While the Council members were arguing, the City Secretary and her 2 assistants were being hit with open record requests daily over these meetings. Thousands of dollars were spent in legal fees, over time pay, not to mention the hours of research. That is why the City Attorney and Council approved this ordinance. It was to keep the boards separate from Council, so even if the boards were arguing amongst themselves, the Council could still function and assist those businesses in need.

Now on 10/04/2022, this sitting Council violated Ordinance 112613 by appointing themselves, all of themselves to the board, a board that one of the Council members resigned from in July. That is why we are here. When I questioned it, no one knew about the ordinance, but I would think the person directing the Council to this route would've done their research a little better. This is like spilling the milk and attempting to put it back in the carton. If you choose to repeal this ordinance, who will be the final voting party for expenditures? What happens when this Council is removed from office and the next Council doesn't like weed ordinance or junk cars? Are we going back instead of forward? Who will govern over the boards when there is an issue? In my opinion this is a bad ideal. I have spent 9 years on this board. I was appointed by the Mayor and Council in 2013, and I am really proud of the things we have accomplished. But I can tell you as one of those City assistants during that time, I never want Blue Ridge to go through that again. Why now do you want to participate on a board that has struggled for years to get/keep members. Could it stem from the August 2nd meeting where the Council discussed turning the board from an EDC to Municipal Development District and did not invite either board to the meeting. We have tried to get people to volunteer for both boards and this right here is exactly why no one will. Why now?

Phillip Pulliam, business at 401 E Lamm, came before the public stating he has a business here in Blue Ridge for 22 years. He has served on the 4A Board, BRASA, as Mayor of Blue

Ridge and is currently on the School Board. The idea is to keep the boards and Council separate and anything else is a conflict of interest. When he was Mayor, the 4A Board had \$40,000 in their account. Now the Board is well over \$200,000 – that’s amazing! It is good to have a couple of Council on the Board, but no more than that. The Board has lost members and it is difficult to find people to serve. It is a bad idea to have under one government. Any wrongdoing, it looks suspicious. This is not a good idea.

Justin Lightbody, residing in Anna, stated his friend Justin Garner asked him to come. The issue sounds monopolized, and he does not want to see Blue Ridge have a negative interest. The ordinance change does not feel like it is a good idea, and it could limit growth. This is a bump in the road to move forward. Mr. Lightbody stated he would like to be proactive and have this City on a good page.

4. Consider and act upon Ordinance 2022-1012-001 amending Section 2.03.061 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Blue Ridge to allow councilmembers, employees, and officials of the city to be appointed as directors to the 4A Economic Development Corporation and 4B Community Development Corporation Boards of Directors

Keith Chitwood motioned to approve the Ordinance as presented with Colby Collinsworth seconding the motion. The floor was open to discussion with Mayor Williams stating she appreciated those attending the meeting and their input on this vital issue. The intent of the Council’s action is in no way to run or do away with the Blue Ridge Economic Development Corporation. In August, the Council was offered information only regarding the Municipal Development District. No one has acted nor said to go forward with this option. It is absurd thinking the Council is doing away with this Board. The effort is to bring the Board into compliance with its own Bylaws. Currently there are 4 members, none of which live inside the City, which opposes the Bylaws. Minutes are not provided after each meeting and are provided at the end of the budget year which is not helpful. Mayor Williams continued stating she appreciates the efforts of this Board and wants to see it excel. As the sales tax is the main source of income, the funds need to be used. The Ordinance change is to offer help.

Dina Brown, residing at 9571 CR 626, questioned why the Blue Ridge Community Development was lumped into this Ordinance. Susan Thomas, City Attorney, stated the originating ordinance consisted of both Boards, and it was correct to change the ordinance for both Boards.

Motions were made with Council voting unanimously. Motion passed.

5. Consider and act upon ratifying the appointments of Keith Chitwood, Colby Collinsworth, Tammy Crosswhite, Mayela Perales, Christina Porath, and Rhonda Williams as directors, and Edie Sims as an ex-officio director, to the 4A EDC Board of Directors

Keith Chitwood motioned to ratify the appointments for the 4A EDC Board of Directors with Mayela Perales seconding the motion. Motion carried unanimously.


6. Adjournment

Christina Porath motioned to adjourn with Colby Collinsworth seconding the motion. Council adjourned at 7:02pm.

APPROVED:

ATTEST:


Rhonda Williams, Mayor


Edie Sims, City Secretary