

**MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF GALVESTON
WORKSHOP - MAY 22, 2025**

5/22/2025 - City Council Minutes

1 DECLARATION OF A QUORUM AND CALL MEETING TO ORDER

With a quorum present, the Workshop was called to order at 9:00 a.m.

2 ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Craig Brown, Mayor Pro Tem Marie Robb, Council Member Sharon Lewis, Council Member David Finklea, Council Member Bob Brown, Council Member Alex Porretto, and Council Member Beau Rawlins.

3 DISCUSSION ITEMS

- 3.A Clarification Of Consent And Regular City Council Agenda Items - This Is An Opportunity For City Council To Ask Questions Of Staff On Consent And Regular Agenda Items (1 Hour)

Items 12B

- 3.B Pelican Island Bridge Update (D Buckley/D Glywasky - 10 min)

Deputy City Manager Dan Buckley reported that the Pelican Island Bridge project is moving forward on several fronts. The City of Galveston is finalizing MOUs with key partners like Galveston County, Texas A&M, Port Houston, and others. Funding gaps remain, but efforts are underway through the Transportation Policy Council (TPC) to secure additional resources, aiming for full funding by 2029. TXDOT has already invested nearly \$7 million in design work, with construction targeted for 2028 or 2029. The city is also trying to get the bridge designated as an "on-system" bridge to shift maintenance responsibilities to TxDOT, though work continues assuming it will remain "off-system." Mayor Pro Tem Marie Robb reported that she is working with a working group formed by H-GAC to identify additional funds for the bridge.

- 3.C Discussion of the Status of the Park Board Hot Tax Audits and the timeliness of the Park Board's Response (C. Brown/Robb/G. Bulgherini - 20 min)

City Auditor Glenn Bulgherini provided an update of the Park Board Hot Tax Audits. The City Council discussed delays in the audit of the Park Board's use of Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) funds. The City Auditor has received about half of the expected documents, which include unusual annotations from the Park Board, complicating the audit. Access to the Park Board's financial systems was revoked, and there are concerns

about \$171,000 of restricted funds used for lobbying, potentially violating state law. Council members expressed frustration over the Park Board's lack of cooperation, delays, and limited transparency. To address this, the Council is considering a special meeting to issue formal directives and possibly launch a formal investigation to ensure accountability and timely completion of the audit.

3.D Discussion on the violations of the Open Meetings Act and Public Information Act by the Galveston Park Board of Trustees (Porretto/C. Brown - 15 min)

Council Member Porretto raised concerns that the Galveston Park Board of Trustees may have violated the Texas Open Meetings Act by making final decisions during closed executive sessions without properly announcing them in public. Specifically, he pointed to two meetings—one on April 30th and another on May 12th—where direction was given to staff or legal counsel in executive session, but the final actions were not clearly disclosed in the public portion of the meetings.

Assistant City Attorney Xochitl Vandiver-Gaskin confirmed that under Texas Government Code §551.102, final decisions must be made in an open meeting with proper notice. While a vote was held in public after the May 12th executive session, the motion was vague and did not clearly state the final action, which some considered problematic.

There was discussion about whether the Park Board's attorney advised them properly, and about what remedies exist for potential violations. Criminal enforcement lies with the local district attorney, while civil remedies include injunctions or mandamus orders, but the practical effectiveness is unclear.

Council members also noted the confusion about the difference between giving direction in executive session versus making a final decision, and the importance of clear communication to the public.

3.E Discussion of Park Board Appointments (C. Brown - 15 min)

Council discussed upcoming Park Board appointments, with four positions open (one confirmed vacancy). Applications will be accepted until June 19, and interviews will be held on June 23.

3.F Update and Discussion of the Terms, Conditions and Zoning Details of the Conveyance of the Rosenberg Property (B Brown/C Brown - 15 min)

The City of Galveston and GISD have shown support for turning the Rosenberg School site into a green space. Current zoning does not allow parks in residential areas. An amendment to the LDRs can be adopted by City Council to allow parks in residential zones, a process that will take about three months. This zoning issue won't delay the conveyance, which isn't tied to the July 1 fundraising deadline. Environmental testing and demolition details are still being finalized. Staff will move forward with the zoning amendment process.

3.G Discussion of the Consultant's Comprehensive Plan Scope of Work as it Relates to Public Engagement (B Brown/C Brown - 15 min)

Executive Director Tim Tietjens and Consultant Andrew Kopel discussed the comprehensive plan's public engagement scope, which currently includes three community workshops, stakeholder meetings, and some outreach. Councilmember Brown suggested expanding engagement with more subcommittees and involvement from key city boards to better reflect community input, noting that the previous plan had broader participation and more funding. Some Council Members expressed concern about increasing costs and emphasized not spending more taxpayer money, pointing out that existing budgeted funds should suffice. The consultant explained that more engagement means higher costs but added that much outreach depends on council and staff efforts. Overall, the consensus was that the current scope meets minimum grant requirements but additional outreach could enhance the process if funding is found, possibly from non-taxpayer sources.

3.H Discussion of Stewart Beach Parks Master Plan/Developer Proposal and Public Input Structure (D. Anderson - 30 min)

Dudley Anderson, the City's Architectural Project Manager and Intern Architect Amber Guerrero provided an update of the Stewart Beach Park Master Plan. Staff is proceeding with the plan approved by the Council in April, working with BRW and subcontractors, including Rogers., and are still searching for a real estate prospectus expert. The goal is to start the master plan now and amend the contract later when the prospectus specialist is found, aiming for contract approval in June. The planning phase is expected to take about 12 months, covering design approvals, bidding, and preparation for construction.

Recommendations from Vision Galveston related to parks and green spaces are being considered. Coordination with coastal resources and regulatory issues (like seawall easements and beach ramps) is ongoing to ensure proper beach access and compliance. There are currently five ramps providing beach access, and no plans to add new ones.

The team wants to begin work soon, with a phased contract approach. The developer market outreach is expected around late this year. BRW leads the project for procurement reasons and familiarity, with Rogers updating previous related work.

Discussion is ongoing about the beach patrol facility's land-side and beach-side components.

3.I Discussion of Updated Development Policies/Incentives and Expanded 380/TIRZ Agreement Structures (M Hay - 40 min)

Economic Development Michele Hay discussed updating Galveston's economic development incentives, especially Chapter 380 agreements, which currently support historic building rehab but lack flexibility and active projects. Proposed changes include broadening geographic scope, adding green infrastructure incentives, encouraging local hiring and material use, and creating clearer guidelines. There's also a need for better public information and an economic impact tool to evaluate projects. The Council will review and provide feedback before drafting updated policies for approval.

3.J Discussion of the Possible Development of a City of Galveston Marine Safety Department (C. Brown - 30 min)

City Manager Brian Maxwell reported that the City of Galveston is exploring creating a

centralized Marine Safety Department to better manage and coordinate marine assets and responses across multiple agencies. A new facility will consolidate boats and equipment to improve efficiency and free police officers to focus on law enforcement. The plan aims to enhance public safety on waterways and beaches without taking resources from existing departments. Coordination with the county and other agencies is part of the plan, with proposals expected during upcoming budget discussions.

3.K Discussion of Short term Rentals: (C. Brown/B. Brown/ D. Glywasky - 45 min)

- 1. Short Term Rental Committee's Status Report and Fiscal Recommendations**
- 2. Use of Registration Fee Revenue**
- 3. Rental Platform Contracts**
- 4. New Ordinance Concerning Permitting and Enforcement**

- 1. Council Member Bob Brown reported that the committee has met twice, focusing initially on establishing direction and reviewing STR management software. Focus will be on enforcement mechanisms, data collection, public transparency, and resource requirements. The Council discussed giving direction to the committee to develop enforceable ordinance recommendations based on the City Attorney's draft ordinance. Council consensus was asking the committee to fast track the parking section of ordinance, with recommendations due to City Council by June 26th.**
- 2. The Council discussed the lack of enforcement, particularly for parking, noise, and occupancy violations. Council Members stressed the need for night and weekend City Marshals this summer, and using existing STR registration fees to fund immediate enforcement. City Manager Brian Maxwell reported that the Marshal Department is severely understaffed with only three law enforcement officers at the moment. The current STR complaint hotline routes calls inefficiently or not in real time.**
- 3. Mayor Pro Tem Marie Robb reported that data indicates 1,000 STRs are unregistered.**

3.L Discussion of Private Beach Ownership and Beach Vendor Agreements (D. Glywasky/T. Tietjens - 20 min)

Council Member Alex Porretto declared a conflict on this item.

City Attorney Don Glywasky provided proposed amendments to the City Code related to private beach ownership and beach vendor agreements. Private beach owners would be able to operate without a concession agreement if they prove ownership. The Park Board oversees state-owned beach leases but lacks enforcement power, leading to conflicts. The proposed ordinance aims to clarify vendor rights, reduce conflicts, and ensure compliance with zoning and permit rules, without adding burdens for minor beach activities.

3.M Discussion of the Enforcement of the City of Galveston's Litter Ordinance

(Porretto/C Brown - 15 min)

Council Member Porretto placed this item on the agenda to discuss the need for better enforcement of the city's litter ordinance, especially on beaches during holidays. The Council discussed more frequent trash pickups, public awareness campaigns like “Only Footprints,” and exploring reusable containers. Council members emphasized the need for funding, staffing, and stricter measures to keep the city clean and improve its image.

3.N Discussion of Consultant's Findings as they Relate to Drainage Regulations
(R. Weinicke - 20 min)

Director Robert Winiecke and LAN Consultant Matt Manges reported that Galveston's drainage regulations are currently strict compared to other communities, requiring detention based on total lot size rather than just impervious areas. Consultants recommend keeping the 25-year storm design but easing detention requirements to encourage development while still protecting against flooding. More data on similar island communities is being gathered, and changes to detention requirements will be brought to City Council at the next meeting.

3.O Discussion of joint meetings between City Council and Planning Commission
(Porretto/Rawlings - 10 min)

The City Council discussed holding two to four joint meetings of City Council and Planning Commission per year to improve communication, align on planning issues like PUDs and SUPs, and address recurring concerns.

4 ADJOURNMENT

The workshop was adjourned at 3:52 p.m.



Janelle Williams, City Secretary

Date Approved: June 26, 2025