

**SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MINUTES
AUGUST 27, 2019**

**MCFARLAND CITY COUNCIL
MCFARLAND SUCCESSOR AGENCY
MCFARLAND PUBLIC FINANCE AUTHORITY
MCFARLAND IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY
MCFARLAND PARKING AUTHORITY**

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Cantu called the meeting to order at 6:39 p.m. at St. Elizabeth Catholic Church, 835 Perkins Ave., McFarland, CA

ROLL CALL

Council Member Present: Cantu, McFarland, Melendez, Perez, Gonzalez
Council Member Absent: None

OFFICIALS PRESENT

Interim City Manager Tooley, Interim Chief of Police/Interim Assistant City Manager Davis, City Clerk Ceja, Administrative Services Director Mosqueda, and Community Development Director Lara

INVOCATION

Father Antero

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Council Member Melendez

PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS

1. Water Listening Session

Finance Director Rocio Mosqueda gave a presentation in English and Spanish. She explained why the rate increase, why the city could not increase the rates slowly, why the city waited so long to increase rates, where the city is financially, the comparison in rates between the City of McFarland and other cities, and provided names of agencies available to help residents with their utility bills.

Residents had two minutes each to comment and ask questions. None of the residents stated their name or address.

The following comments and questions were made:

1. Why continue with development if we do not have enough wells to support more residents.
2. The city should lower rates for senior citizens and disable residents.
3. Take in consideration that the majority of residents work in the fields and do not earn a lot of money.
4. Where did the money go because there has not been any improvements in the city?
5. Was the construction of the Browning Well necessary?
6. Be fair because there are residents who do not have a yard and pay as much as a resident with a pool.
7. Residents commented on pictures they take of city employees' not reading meters.
8. Do something for the residents or else the residents will not be fare with city either.
9. Why is there a need to have two city employees read meters when there is only one needed?
10. The residents should have been better informed.
11. City employees do not do their job.
12. Why was Mr. Tooley hired knowing he was fired from the City of Madera?
13. City should create a program for senior citizens.
14. City should dedicate an employee to help senior citizens with applying for low-income programs to help with their utility bills.
15. Water is necessary and the city has to do what is best for all.
16. Residents should attend meetings to know what is going on and not wait until something like this happens to go and complain.
17. How the revenue collected allocated?
18. Search for grants that can help with money for wells.

All council members had a chance to respond to the comments and questions.

- Council Member Melendez explained to residents that the rates had to be raised and he understands that it was a big hit but it is something that had to happen. He understands that the majority of the residents are field workers and cannot pay their water bill but the city will try to find a way to reduce the rates. He reminded residents that he is always available to any residents who have questions or concerns.
- Council Member Perez thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She explained to the residents that she is new to council and she is still learning the process. She asked everyone to understand that the city is going through financial difficulties therefore she asks that the city come together to be united.
- Mayor Pro Tem McFarland introduced himself. He mentioned to residents that the decision that council has to make is not only for a certain group of residents but it is for all the community. The city is going to a rough time now and expenses have gone up. He explained that water is very valuable and everyone needs it. He mentioned that it was a tough decision for council but if he had a choice to vote now on lowering the rates he would vote no on it. He asks that everyone put their emotions aside and come together for the community.
- Council Member Gonzalez thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for all the comments. She agrees that the city needs to look into lowering the rates for senior citizens. She mentioned that the city should look into finding grants to help senior citizens. She stated that residents could go to the office to speak to Ms. Lara so that she can help with applications for low-income programs. She asked that residents go to city hall if they have questions regarding the city's finances. In regards to the water employees not reading meters, she will have Interim City Manager Tooley investigate the complaints.
- Mayor Cantu explained that the rates had to be raised because the city was not in accordance with the state. He stated that all expenses have gone up and because of that, the rates also have to go up. He mentioned that the state is going to start regulating the water a lot more and the rates are going to have to go up a lot more. He explained that money from the water fund has been subsidized with general fund money to maintain the rates low. Mayor asked the residents to contact Mr. Tooley or himself if they have any complaints, question, or concerns. He stated that he is not here to hurt anybody and apologized for any miscommunications.

Ms. Mosqueda mentioned that the city has been growing and we do not want to stop growth. She asked residents to call or visit city hall if there is any concerns with city personnel. She asked for everyone's patience and understanding through these difficult times.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Council Member Melendez, seconded by Council Member Gonzalez, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 pm.



Claudia Ceja, City Clerk

