CITY COUNCIL 7/23/26

Meeting Minutes

July 23, 2026, 6:00 PM - 9:39 PM

100 Park Street, Trinidad, TX 75163, US

1. Call to Order & Establish Quorum

Mayor Dennis Haws called the regular session of the City Council to order on Thursday, July 23, 2026, at 6:00 PM at 100 Park Street, Trinidad City Hall. A quorum was established with all five council members present.

Present: Velma Womack, Steven Stearman, Leah Melton, Marie Bannister, Chandra Sutton

2. Invocation

The invocation was led by Mayor Dennis Haws.

3. Pledge of Allegiance and Texas Pledge

The Pledge of Allegiance and Texas Pledge were recited.

4. Visitors/Citizens Inquiry

Four residents addressed the Council during the public comment period.

Beth Collinsworth shared a personal account of a serious illness, including a UTI and E. Coli infection she attributed to possible water contamination. She urged the Council and city water personnel to take water quality complaints more seriously and act swiftly to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.

Lindsey Patterson raised concerns regarding the City's lack of a municipal attorney and the legal and financial risks this presents, particularly given the complexity of items on the evening's agenda. She identified deficiencies in at least one existing city contract and stressed that competent legal counsel is a necessity, not a luxury, given the City's financial challenges, pending litigation, and upcoming election. She also noted that the published agenda did not include a start time.

John Baker expressed concern that long-standing community members were not being given adequate respect or consideration by current city leadership. He echoed the call for retaining a city attorney before proceeding with major agenda items, and recommended that items 5, 7, 8, 10, 13, 17, 18, 19, and 22 be tabled pending proper legal review.

Stacey Farmer acknowledged the lack of clarity in several agenda items and similarly supported retaining a city attorney. She expressed positive support for agenda item 8 (Chris Quinn's professional services agreement) and item 25 (the EDC $300,000 grant for water infrastructure). Regarding item 19, she noted that the proposed rezoning area is substantially larger than simply "behind the Dollar General" and requested that commercial property in that area be preserved at a larger footprint to accommodate future commercial development.

5. Convene into Executive Session

At 6:33 PM, Mayor Haws convened the Council into Executive Session pursuant to Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code to discuss personnel matters involving Interim Police Chief Cameron Beckham.

Note: The meeting transcript provided covers proceedings through the convening of Executive Session. Department Reports (Agenda Item 27) were taken up prior to the Executive Session during the recorded portion of the meeting. Summaries of those reports are included below under Item 27. No transcript was available for Action Items 6 through 26 or Items 28–29.

27. Department Reports

Police Department

Interim Police Chief Cameron Beckham's report for the month of June was presented. The department recorded approximately 52 total stops (22 citations, 30 warnings), 4 incident reports, 435 business and security checks, 0 arrests, 1 city ordinance violation, and 14 code enforcement letters. Full-time officers logged 618 hours; reserve officers logged 40 hours, for a combined total of 658 hours. The department's roster currently stands at 5 full-time officers and 3 reserve volunteers, with plans to hire one additional officer. Officer Tanner, the department's SRO, is attending virtual school-based law enforcement training. The Chief noted that upcoming TCOLE-required policy updates will need Council approval in coming months.

Water Department

In the absence of the water department contractor, Pat Jones of the Water Advisory Committee presented the report. Routine operations were completed, including plant and system sampling, main flushing, and lift station checks. Staff responded to 21 service calls, including 5 leak/meter checks, 4 line flush requests, 4 water turn-ons/shut-offs, 3 pressure checks, 3 clog line calls, 1 sewer backup investigation, and 1 water leak repair on Leakline Road. A flush hydrant was installed at the intersection of Olive and Walnut Streets. A meeting with TCEQ's Financial, Managerial, and Technical (FMT) Assistance team — a free state program — is scheduled for August 17th to assess water system issues and provide recommendations.

EDC

EDC President Lisa Hebrank reported that the EDC's June meeting minutes, which included approval of the $300,000 infrastructure grant, were included in the Council's packet. She noted that finalizing the associated contracts is contingent on the City retaining a municipal attorney. The reconciliation report reflected expenditures for property maintenance, an Amazon order, and Walmart purchases for events, as well as an ongoing land payment with an approximate remaining balance of $64,000.

Planning and Zoning

P&Z Board Member Eve Ynes expressed concern that if the rezoning of the property behind the Dollar General (Item 19) is approved and the underlying project does not proceed, the City could be left with an undesirable zone designation. She emphasized that rezoning decisions carry significant long-term consequences and warrant careful deliberation. Councilmember Stearman acknowledged the P&Z approval of the rezoning but agreed that further research is warranted.

Event Committee

No report was given; the Event Committee representative was unavailable.

Financial Report

Councilmember Steven Stearman presented a financial summary based on Profit & Loss data from October 2025 through June 2026. The City's overall financial health was rated approximately 6.7 out of 10, indicating the ability to meet obligations. Contractor spending was rated 4 out of 10, flagged as an area requiring improvement toward a target score of 6. Water revenue analysis also scored 4 out of 10, reflecting a discrepancy between water delivered and revenue collected — an issue Councilmember Stearman indicated he believes he has identified and intends to bring to the next agenda. A month-over-month decline of approximately $14,000 in revenue was noted, consistent with a reported 25% revenue reduction over the preceding six months, attributed primarily to water revenue losses.

6. Reconvene into Regular Session

The Mayor reconvened the Regular Session at 6:50 PM.

7. Discuss, consider, and take possible action on the salary of Interim Police Chief Cameron Beckham

No action was taken. The Council noted that a prior understanding with Chief Beckham was to defer any salary adjustment until the new budget cycle.

8. Discuss, consider, and take possible action regarding the Professional Services Agreement with Chris Quinn, including grant administration, consulting services, compensation, and contract terms

Contractor Chris Quinn addressed the Council, providing an overview of ongoing and prospective grant activities, including the WSIG grant, the Resilient Communities Program (RCP) grant, the Vision Zero pedestrian safety grant, and various micro-grant opportunities. Quinn clarified the terms of the existing agreement, noting it is fully terminable at will with no obligation on the part of the Council. He requested that the Mayor and Councilmember Stearman serve as his primary points of contact, with all correspondence copied to the full Council. The Council agreed to this communication arrangement. The agreement was tabled pending preparation of a corrected document, as errors in the contract language were identified during the meeting.

> Motion to table Item 8 was made by Councilmember Marie and seconded by Councilmember Leah. The motion carried.

9. Discuss, consider, and take possible action on the Interlocal Agreement with the Henderson County Election Administrator for the November 3, 2026 General Election

The Council approved the standard interlocal agreement with Henderson County for administration of the November 3, 2026 General Election.

> Motion to approve the Interlocal Agreement with Henderson County was made by Councilmember Steven Stearman and seconded by Councilmember Marie. The motion carried.

10. Discuss, consider, and take possible action on the reauthorization of the one-fourth (¼) of one percent local sales and use tax dedicated to street maintenance in the City of Trinidad

The Council discussed that the City had not been collecting the additional 0.25% sales tax, resulting in an estimated $66,000 per year in uncollected revenue. The Council voted to reauthorize the tax and directed staff to contact the Texas Comptroller to initiate the process.

> Motion to approve the reauthorization of the 0.25% local sales and use tax dedicated to street maintenance was made by Councilmember Steven Stearman and seconded by Councilmember Chandra. The motion carried.

11. Discuss, consider, and take possible action to appoint Charles Colman to the Water Advisory Committee

> Motion to appoint Charles Coleman to the Water Advisory Committee was made by Councilmember Marie and seconded by Councilmember Chandra. The motion carried.

12. Discuss, consider, and take possible action to appoint Steven Haynes to the Water Advisory Committee

Discussion arose regarding Steven Haynes's prior threats to sue the City. Supporters argued that his business experience and knowledge would benefit the advisory committee, and that the committee is advisory only with no decision-making authority. The Water Advisory Committee chair expressed confidence in his ability to work productively with Haynes toward the betterment of Trinidad. The appointment was approved by a vote of 3 ayes to 2 noes.

> Motion to appoint Steven Haynes to the Water Advisory Committee was made by Councilmember Steven Stearman and seconded by Councilmember Leah. The motion carried 3–2.

13. Discuss, consider, and take possible action to designate Councilmember Steven Stearman as Council Liaison to the Water Advisory Committee

> Motion to designate Councilmember Steven Stearman as Council Liaison to the Water Advisory Committee was made by Councilmember Marie and seconded by Councilmember Leah. The motion carried 4–0, with one abstention by Councilmember Stearman.

14. Discuss, consider, and take possible action to authorize issuance of an RFQ for professional engineering services for the City's water infrastructure assessment, CIP, GIS mapping, asset inventory, planning-level cost estimates, project sequencing, and funding opportunities

> Motion to authorize issuance of the RFQ for professional engineering services for the City's water infrastructure assessment was made by Councilmember Steven Stearman and seconded by Councilmember Leah. The motion carried.

15. Discuss, consider, and take possible action regarding repairs to flood damage associated with the city alleyway, including consideration of submitted bids

A property owner presented the Council with a request for the City to fund repairs to flood damage affecting their building, which they attributed to the elevated condition of the adjacent city alleyway resulting from years of overlays. Councilmember Stearman presented guidance from the Texas Municipal League (TML) and a Texas Attorney General opinion indicating that the City is generally prohibited under the Texas Constitution (Article III, Section 52(a)) from directing municipal funds toward repairs benefiting a private property without a legal obligation to do so. The Council acknowledged the City's separate obligation to maintain the alley itself. The recommended course of action was for the property owner to file a claim with the City's insurance carrier. The Council denied the request to fund private flood damage repairs.

> Motion to deny the request for repairs to flood damage associated with the city alleyway was made by Councilmember Steven Stearman and seconded by Councilmember Velma. The motion carried.

16. Discuss, consider, and take possible action to authorize issuance of an RFQ for professional services to evaluate, design, and oversee repairs to the City Hall roof and water intrusion affecting the main office

The Council determined that the appropriate first step was to review the City's insurance policy to determine coverage before issuing an RFQ. The item was tabled pending that review.

> Motion to table Item 16 was made by Councilmember Marie and seconded by Councilmember Velma. The motion carried.

17. Discuss, consider, and take possible action on amendments to Ordinance No. 2022-008

The Council initially tabled this item but subsequently took it back up after recognizing that the Planning and Zoning Commission lacked a quorum under the existing ordinance. The Council amended Ordinance No. 2022-008 to reduce the composition of the Planning and Zoning Commission from seven members to five, and updated the quorum and voting requirements in Section 6(b) accordingly, reducing the quorum from four to three appointed commissioners.

> Motion to amend Ordinance No. 2022-008 to reduce the commission membership to five and adjust quorum and voting provisions was made by Councilmember Steven Stearman and seconded by Councilmember Velma. The motion carried.

18. Discuss, consider, and take possible action on amendments to the Planning and Zoning Bylaws

The Council determined that with the commission now able to achieve a quorum under the amended ordinance, the Planning and Zoning Commission should convene its own meeting to revise its bylaws and bring the proposed amendments back to the Council for approval. The item was tabled.

> Motion to table Item 18 was made by Councilmember Marie and seconded by Councilmember Leah. The motion carried.

19. Discuss, consider, and take possible action on rezoning property behind the Dollar Store from Commercial to Manufactured Home Park (M-2)

A developer presented a proposal for a Class A manufactured housing community on the property behind the Dollar Store, noting that House Bill 785 now requires cities with zoning to designate a manufactured housing district. The proposed development would feature 6,000 square-foot lots with concrete streets, new homes starting at approximately $75,000, and a land-lease model. The developer noted that the Planning and Zoning Commission had already voted to approve the rezoning. The Council approved the rezoning as recommended by the Planning and Zoning Commission, with the understanding that the portion of the property fronting Highway 31 would remain commercially zoned. The developer indicated a subsequent variance request for lot size would be required and would return through the Planning and Zoning Commission.

> Motion to approve the rezoning of the property behind the Dollar Store from Commercial to Manufactured Home Park (M-2) as approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission was made by Councilmember Steven Stearman and seconded by Councilmember Chandra. The motion carried.

20. Discuss, consider, and take possible action on the resignation of Jerry Bannister from the Planning and Zoning Commission

> Motion to accept the resignation of Jerry Bannister from the Planning and Zoning Commission was made by Councilmember Chandra and seconded by Councilmember Leah. The motion carried, with one abstention.

21. Discuss, consider, and take possible action on the resignation of Tonya Womack from the Planning and Zoning Commission

> Motion to accept the resignation of Tonya Womack from the Planning and Zoning Commission was made by Councilmember Marie and seconded by Councilmember Chandra. The motion carried.

22. Discuss, consider, and take possible action regarding proposed residential construction by Lorenzo Smith on McEntire Road

No representative for this item was present to address the Council. The item was tabled.

> Motion to table Item 22 was made by Councilmember Marie and seconded by Councilmember Leah. The motion carried.

23. Discuss, consider, and take possible action on renewing the City's contract with TxDOT

The Mayor reported that he had contacted TxDOT regarding reflector maintenance following road resurfacing work and that TxDOT requested renewal of the interlocal maintenance agreement. As part of the renewal, the Council agreed to rescind a prior request that had excluded tree trimming over state-maintained roads from TxDOT's services, thereby restoring that responsibility to TxDOT.

> Motion to renew the City's contract with TxDOT was made by Councilmember Marie and seconded by Councilmember Leah. The motion carried.

24. Discuss, consider, and take possible action regarding the lien on the Old City Hall property and options to facilitate release of the lien

Councilmember Stearman presented a detailed review of the old City Hall property. Key findings included: a $129,026.58 lien on the property, a pre-existing encroachment issue wherein a portion of the building sits on an adjacent privately owned parcel (Y&S), and an unresolved federal tax lien of approximately $31,000. Due to the encroachment, the City cannot convey clear title to any party other than the adjacent property owner, making Y&S the only viable purchaser. A purchase agreement for $25,000 had previously been approved in Council minutes from July 2024. The Council voted to remove the lien from the old City Hall property and honor the previously approved sale to Y&S, with the lien to be transferred to another City-owned property.

> Motion to remove the lien on the Old City Hall property and proceed with the sale to Y&S was made by Councilmember Steven Stearman and seconded by Councilmember Leah. The motion carried.

25. Discuss, consider, and take action on the EDC grant for an amount up to $300,000.00 for infrastructure planning and economic development projects authorized under Texas Local Government Code 505.158, including engineering, GIS mapping, infrastructure assessment, capital improvement planning and grant preparation

The Council confirmed that the EDC had previously approved a grant of up to $300,000 to the City for infrastructure planning activities under Texas Local Government Code §505.158. Funds are to be expended specifically for designated project activities and will not be deposited into the general fund as a lump sum.

> Motion to accept the EDC grant of up to $300,000 for infrastructure planning and economic development projects was made by Councilmember Chandra and seconded by Councilmember Marie. The motion carried.

26. Discuss, consider and take action on a plan for hiring staffing for the office

The Mayor noted the need to post requests for resumes for a City Administrator, Municipal Judge, and other open positions. Councilmember Stearman reported that staff had contacted 57 attorneys and sent eight certified mail notices in an effort to secure a City Attorney, with no responses received to date. The Council agreed to continue outreach, including to attorney Blake Armstrong, whose office had been previously contacted. No formal action was taken; the item served as a status update and discussion of process.

28. Council Member Inquiry Time

Councilmember Stearman raised three items for future agenda consideration: (1) a discrepancy in the City's trash service tax, noting the City is paying approximately $36,000 per year in tax while only collecting $17.40 per customer; (2) an estimated $500,000 in billing errors identified in the utility billing system due to rates not being charged in accordance with the City's own ordinances, including commercial rates being set below residential rates; and (3) the need for a utility rate study and annual rate adjustment policy tied to an inflation index. The Council agreed these items should be placed on a future agenda. Discussion also touched on the need for a budget workshop, which was deferred pending completion of the City's audit.

29. Adjourn

> Motion to adjourn was made by Councilmember Marie and seconded by ____. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned.